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Cover by W. F. Soare
Headings by I. B. Hazelton, Don Hewitt, Amos Sewell and George H. Wert
Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Word wanted of Jack Oliver Hanlon, who left his home in Seattle, Wash., Oct. 23, 1932, and was a regular reader of Adventure. Notify his mother, Mrs. W. F. Hanlon, 2321 Fairview No., Seattle, Wash.

Any man who served with Ambulance Company No. 3, First Sanitary Train, First Division, A. E. F., write Archibald B. Oliver, 1747 Kentucky Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Captain Fred Ewing, E-Marine of Santo Domingo, please get in touch with Mrs. Sarah Olson of 2103 N.W., Hoyt St., Portland, Oregon, or Ethel Ewing, 136-19th St., E., Holland, Michigan.

Will "Sarge" Ralph Kingsley of Military Specialist Company, A.P.O. 727, write to "Kid" Collins Ewing, Odessa, Mo.

Eugene Barry, in 1912 Chief Steward *S. S. Byron*, New York to S. America. Later heard of in New York and in the Middle West. His brother, William Barry, Tweenways, East End, Lymington, Hampshire, England, would welcome any news.

Richard H. Wells, Box 154, Clearwater, Florida, seeks news of his friend Lee (Bill) Elliott. Last heard from was in 1922, New York State.

Wm. P. Liebenrood, who worked on construction of Madera-Mamore Railway, last heard from at Puerto Veljo, Brazil, in 1914, please send word to G. C. Hagerman, 700 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles.

Mrs. Beatrice Stafford Grigsby, Box 208, Paintsville, Ky., wants word of her son, Jesse

John Stafford Franklin, worked in Akron, Ohio, as John Stafford, for Goodyear Rubber Co.; last heard of ten years ago.

Word wanted of Calvin William (Slim) Brown, once of Ranger, Texas, by Isaac Simmons, Bloom, Kansas.

Ralph Cornwall or Cornwell, formerly of "American Legion" in Canadian Army, transferred to Intelligence service, reported caught in Germany and shot. Lately reported living. Old buddy, Wayne G. Putnam, R.R. 8, Dayton, Ohio, would like word.

Hans A. Schnell, 253 Cumberland St., Brooklyn, wants word of his brother Fred Schnell, last known address Middlesex Hospital, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Gilbert Thompson, about 43, Swede, former member of Medical Corps 89th Division during 1917-1918. Last heard of he was living in Cloquet, Minn., in 1925. Anyone knowing of him please write to James C. McKinney, CO. 3855 C.C.C., Groveland, Calif.

Anyone who was in the 4th Casual Company, Camp Lewis, Washington, please write to Clarence Parker, Gerber, California.

James P. FitzGerald, serving about the *U.S.S. West Virginia* in 1933, write to K. Downes, 231 George St., Peterboro, Canada.

Information desired regarding James Conroy Kennedy, originally from Wisconsin, last heard from in 1929 while working on construction project near Barranquilla, Colombia, S.A.—A. Kennedy, 2209 Barnard St., Savannah, Ga.

Wanted: Address of Alfred Willy, who was at Los Zanos, Philippine Islands, in 1915. Alfred W. Southwick, 78 Burnside Avenue, Newport, R. I.

Emile Cuschina, of San Jose, California, get in touch with old friend Bill Gianella, Marysville, Calif.

Wanted—word from Otto Meyne, formerly Battery D, 7th Field Artillery, Madison Barracks, N. Y. Nevin Hayes, 1012 Wood St., Wilkinsburg, Pa.

John V. Gatton, now 27, last heard from leaving Joplin, Mo., for New Orleans, in 1931. Notify mother, Mrs. Ida Gatton, Danvers, Montana.

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My blade was beaten fiercely upward.

BLACKCOCK'S FEATHER

Part One of Five

By MAURICE WALSH

THIS is the story of me, David Gordon, and I will begin it on that day in May that I walked down the quay wall at Mouth of Avon, below Bristol, and held discourse with one Diggory, sailing-master of the *Speckled Hind.* I begin it on that day because it was on that day Life began for me.

The sailing-master stood wide-leg on his poop deck, a short square fellow with a spade beard below a leather basnet. The gray-green waters of the Bristol sea shimmered and ran behind his wide shoulders; and the wing of a gull, white-flashing in the sun, flicked and dipped across the green, and the uncanny cry of the bird made mock of me and of all men. He was in converse with a tall

springald of a gallant, who leaned in a carelessly elegant pose against one of the caryatids, slim rose-hosed legs ankle-crossed, and a gauntleted hand in the silken folds of slashed trunks.

The shipmen were rolling casks of Spain wine on board, and the roll of the casks on the wooden shell of the quay had the quivering deep boom of a drum. I picked a road between them, and stood on the edge of the wharf within a long stride of the wide rail on the poop.

The shipmaster glanced up at me from under his black brows, and went on talking. I waited until he looked again.

"Master," I called then, " a word with you!"

The gallant facing him turned, and his countenance surprised me. His back was the back of a court popinjay, but his face was the face of a man. Below the brim of a high, plumed hat a bold blue eye looked out at each side of a strong, bony nose, and lip and chin carried a trained, but manly, amber beard.

"Yourself it is?" greeted the shipmaster in his Cornish tongue. "You come early."

"A week past," I explained, "I engaged with you a passage for two men to Dublin town in Ireland."

"Aye! An' if you be aboard at run of tide come seven of the clock, in Dublin town you will be in three days, in spite

of the king o' Spain and the Waterford pirates."

"Now I need a passage for but one man."

"One let it be," said he, "and no questions asked."

"I paid you an English pound for each passage, and would claim one back, if I might."

And at that the silken gallant threw up his head and laughed.

"You laugh easily, sir," said I mildly.

"The only way to laugh." His was the light, mincing tone of London court. "I think, sir, that your nation is known to me."

"It is not, sir," said I. "I have no nation."

"An you please. Many of that breed there be, and most of them finish in the same way—head on spike over a town gate."

"From hurting men in silk doublets."

"Touch, sir!" He threw up his gauntleted hand in the fencer's gesture. "Silk doublet I wear, and hurt I avoid without good reason. Well, Master Diggory?"

Diggory, the shipmaster, looked at me, a gleam in his eye, and shook his head. " 'Tis against the rule."

I was as reasonable as any man.

"If 'tis so, it cannot be helped," I said. "But your rule is a dishonest one, whoever made it."

He mocked me with his great bellow of a laugh.

"To tell truth," said he, "I made that rule myself this very minute."

I looked him over very carefully. Though his eyes were merry there was a hot spark behind them. Now, a pound is a pound, and I had not many left in my purse, but, half Scot though I might be, it was not the gold coin that urged me on. It was the Gael in me that hated to be laughed at.

"A rule made by one man," said I, "should be in the keeping of that man. If you are honest as well as Cornish you will be putting an addendum to it." That was a long speech for me.

"I might," said he, "if I could remember it."

"That any man who could get the unused fare back from you would be welcome to it."

"Surely," he cried. "That goes without saying."

The hot spark in his black eyes had not belied him. His type was known to me. In Picardy and the Walloons I had met many of his kidney—squat fellows with great girth of chest, vain of their sheer strength, and despising and disliking tall men.

Small hardy men I had met, too, who were always in the company of tall men and loved by them. Tall enough was I, and, at that time, I did not think any man drawing breath was stronger. At the back of my mind I was sorry to be taking advantage of this fellow's vanity and dislike.

He thrust a stained brown paw into his leather trunks and displayed a fat skin purse; he shook it, and it clinked richly.

"Your coin is in there with two-three others," he taunted. "Come and get it if you have the guts, long-shanks!"

In two strides I was over the rail and on the poop. He was surprised at my readiness. With a ludicrous hurry he fumbled his purse into its hiding place and backed away, one shoulder hunched forward and an elbow crooked, like a man used to wrestling.

I turned to the gallant, still elegantly aslouch against the caryatid, and took off my fine Highland bonnet.

"If it please you," I requested, holding it out to him. "I would not like that blackcock's feather broken."

He took the bonnet in the tips of his gauntleted fingers.

"Better it than the broken head you will have in a trice," he warned. "Cornish men start wrestling with mother's pap. Guard you!"

Suddenly everything was quiet all around us. The rumble of the wine casks ceased, and from the distance came the faint clang of chains on board one of William de Burgh's transport ships. And then the gull's cry again mocked us.

It was as I turned from the gallant that the shipmaster made his rush, head down like a bull. But just for that blind rush I had played. I slipped a bare step aside, and as he went by dealt him a single thrust of hand and foot. He fell flat on his face, my knee in his back—and before he could twist I had his purse

in one hand and my pound in the other. And before he was on his feet I was over the rail and on the quay wall. In sword-play, in wrestling, in life, one has to be quick or eat dust.

I held up the coin for him to see, whereat he swore terribly and made a rush for the rail. I threw his purse in his face, and, shut-eyed, he clutched at it. And there was my fine gallant facing him.

"Your rule settled for you, my Diggory," he said.

The shipmaster tried to get by, but the gallant brought gauntleted hand clap on shoulder, and his voice, no longer mincing, was sharp as hand-clap. "Enough, Master Diggory! One addendum at a time. Enough, I say!"

Diggory drew back, agrowl; on the wharf wall a man laughed; and the rumbling of the casks again made the air hollow. It was but a small incident after all, and it was finished.

The gallant came over the rail with lithe grace and was facing me on the quay, holding my bonnet out in his finger-tips.

"Your cock's feather would have run no risk," he said. "Might I have a word with you?"

"If your road is mine," said I, who had no desire further to bandy words with him or with the irate shipmaster.

And so we went up the quay wall, side by side.

BY habit I am a leisurely, long-striding walker, as one is who has spent years aimlessly, and this courtier-gallant had the light carriage of one used to picking his steps across polished floors. We were, indeed, no matched pair. He was tall and lithely slim; I was taller, and heavy shouldered above lean stomach. His silk hose and orange buskins, his slashed trunks and lace ruff, his short scarlet-lined cloak with rapier acock below it were a complete contrast to my sober cloth and leather, and plain black-hafted knife at hip. But I do think that my bonnet with blackcock's tail over one ear was a more gallant headgear than his high-crowned hat.

Also, he was handsome and bearded, while I was clean-shaven and ugly. Ugly! Aye! Ugly I was, and ugly I am; a dangerous, sullen fellow to outward seeming, though, in truth, I was, even then, of mild and reasonable habit. My face belied me. It was a long hatchet face, a bony dour face, with red-brown eyes deep-set close to a lean nose, and dark red hair waving back from a high jut of brow. No maid might look at me twice; and men might count me dangerous, a man too ready for bare steel. Yet in all my twenty-eight years I had never pulled sword in anger, never drawn blood with point or edge, never sought a quarrel or made one. I was but a plain Highland clansman, with a clansman's loyalty, used to following my father here and there in strange places and biding my time patiently.

This tall gallant gave me a sideways look.

"What I would ask," said he, courteously enough, "is why you seek passage to Ireland."

I considered that question.

"If you have the right to ask that," I told him at last, "I will answer you with truth—or lie."

"As seems best to you. I am Francis Vaughan, Knight and Queen's Captain, brother-in-law to William de Burgh, the new Lord Deputy of Ireland—a prudent veteran!—and any man who would set foot in Dublin these days must bear with his questioning."

"In that case, Sir Francis Vaughan," said I, "I will tell you that my name is David Gordon, out of Scotland, and that I go to Ireland to seek my fortune."

At that he halted his light stride and, with that gay habit of his, threw back his head and laughed pleasantly. And this time I halted with him and patiently let him have his laugh out.

"Your pardon," he excused. "But it is droll that a man should seek Ireland and a fortune at the same time." He let his eyes rove over me from heel to crown. "The only plenty in wild Ireland these days that might suit you is a plenitude of blows." He paused for a reply.

"I am no dealer in blows," I told him.

I saw by his smile that he did not believe me.

"In my queen's Ireland you will deal

or be dealt them. Quit me of offense, Master David Gordon, but back there on the *Speckled Hind* your treatment of hot Diggory was so featly managed that I am prompted to think you a dangerous man behind a sword—if you carry one."

"An Andrea Ferrara, but—"

"And it is well worth inquiring on which side you might use it."

"Sir," said I, "three days ago I could have answered your inquiry if I had had a mind. But now I cannot."

He looked at me with puzzled scrutiny, and then shrugged his shoulders. "Ah, well! Let it be! Your answer can wait. One other question. Who was the other for whom you had passage engaged?"

"My father. I buried him yesterday in St. Werburgh's churchyard."

And that is why I begin my story on this day. For until my father died I was not the entity that is David Gordon. I was only my father's son, following him about in strange and lonely towns in France and the Netherlands.

MY father was aye a wandering man, and a wandering man he died. He was younger son of Gordon of Auchindoun in Scotland, sept of Huntly, and he had two loves in all his life: my mother, who died in his arms at Auchindoun, and his sovereign, Mary Queen, whose headless body he saw in the castle of Fotheringay. And that last love ruined his life and left me without a career.

In his early manhood he had gone adventuring with one of the MacNeill fighting-men into Dalriada and Claneboy, across the Irish Sea, and as far as the wild, half royal, open-handed court kept by Shane O'Neill, Prince of Ulster, at Dungannon. It was there that he met and became friendly with Donal O'Cahan, Chief of Ciannachta, and accepted an invitation to a feasting at the O'Cahan stronghold of Dungiven on the Roe. And there, at Dungiven, he saw Fionuala, daughter of the house, and his heart became entangled in the meshes of her red hair.

He was only a penniless younger son, and she the daughter of a chief who counted ten thousand head of kine and led five hundred gallowglasses into battle. But love does not calculate by beeves or battle-axes, and the two were secretly wed by a young Austin monk out of Arachty, and fled to the protection of Sorley Boy MacDonnell in the Antrim Fastnesses.

My father was at that last grim feast that Sorley Boy and his Scots gave the great Shane O'Neill in the Glens, a feast that began with boiled ox-blood and ended with daggers. Twenty black-knife strokes went to the killing of the O'Neill, and the blood spilled that night was the first of an ocean. But for that long spilling my father did not tarry. He was one of the few who stood at the O'Neill's side that night, and again he had to flee. This time he brought his young wife home to Auchindoun.

There at Auchindoun was I born, and there my Irish mother died before ever I knew her. And yet, dimly, I remember a tall white woman with sunny red hair that, I think, was she; but sometimes memory grows confused, and the woman with sun in her hair might have been Mary of Scotland. That time she journeyed into the Highlands to make the Gael her own, my father, tall and handsome Iain Gordon, saw the queen at Balvenie Castle, and talked with her, and sat at her right hand, and thereafter, Gordon or no Gordon, he was the queen's man in victory and in defeat.

He was on her side against John Knox, who, I think, longed overmuch to be at her side, and against the Lords Regent and Elizabeth of England and the world. He helped George Douglas to smuggle her across Loch Leven; he drew blood for her at Langside; he followed her into English exile; and was in all the conspiracies to set her on one throne or on two—at Sheffield, Wingfield, Tutbury, and that final fatal one of Babington's that cost Mary her head.

It nigh cost him his own. With the net closing on him, he but barely managed to wriggle through and get away in a coastwise boat out of Whitby; landing at Stanehive, and making his way through the Deeside passes at Auchindoun, where I was—where I had always been—a lad short of twenty and coming to my many inches and shoulder spread, as well I might in that Highland air.

The gray tower of Auchindoun, within its foursquare gray wall, stands high above the clear-running water of the Fiddich River, its back to the brown hills of heather, and looking across the wide, hollow green bowl of valley to the smooth breasts of the Convals and the high tilted cap of big Ben Rinnes; a sunny and a windy place, peopled by a strong and kindly people, not yet made stern and silent by the austere urges of Calvinism—that strange faith evolved in a land in no way kin to Scotland.

There for eighteen years I had lived the life of a Highland youth, learning little in book-lore, but a goodly store from Nature. A Benedictine father out of Pluscarden taught my cousins and myself a little Latin and some English and a fair theory of Christianity, but his lessons we were aye ready to forsake for a turn at the Fiddich trout or at Huntly's deer away up in Corryhabbie, or for a bout of wrestling or sword-play down below at the Kirkton of Mortlach.

A splendid fine youth, that of mine, if only I had realized the fact! Youth never does. My father was away in a fairy world playing gallant adventures, risking but never losing life in a queen's cause, throwing a bold game against the English. And I would be with him in that romantic realm. How I used long to be with him! And with him I would be as soon as beard stood up to razor's edge—as soon as I could swing broadswords in double-cross. I was with him soon enough and I was to be with him many weary days.

For Edinburgh and the new church in Scotland had a long reach, and my popish-plotting father was none too safe even in the remote glen of the Fiddich. Moreover, his elder brother, Alistair, now Laird of Auchindoun, was a prudent man who wanted no trouble, and, saying few words, he nevertheless made plain that a long visit was not expected, and that any help that might be given must be given at a distance. My father took the hint and umbrage at the same time. Within a month he was out of Auchindoun and I with him, and a week after that both of us were at sea, and came to land at Dunkirk in France.

I was a happy and excited lad. For was I not at my gallant father's right hand, with life opening out before me? My grief! Instead, life shut down before my long nose, and all prospects were at the other side of a high wall. Even at this day I do not like to think or talk of the time that ensued, and I will say as little about it as I may.

MY father was a loyal man to a single cause, and a man of principle; that is, he was something of a fanatic. He hated the English. No, not the English, but Elizabeth their queen, who had wronged his own. He would take service against her, given the chance; but there his principle intervened. To fight Elizabeth he would have to serve against the Netherlands, and that he would not do, for the Netherlands was a small nation, like his own, fighting dourly for freedom against the might of Spain. And neither could he take service with France, for France was playing a game with Spain and carefully biding her time. He was a fighting man who could not sell his sword, moving here and there across Picardy and the Walloon and Flemish provinces, waiting for a change of wind and a shuffle among alliances. And change and shuffle were long in coming—too long in coming for us.

We were driven to many shifts. Aid from Auchindoun was tardy and never princely. It did no more than eke out what we earned precariously by our swords and our sinew.

By our swords? So. I, that was so keen to wield a soldier's blade, never wielded any but the sham one of the fencer. My father, a skilled swordsman, taught fencing and wrestling in small towns on the skirts of campaigning armies, and I was his foil.

Broadsword, broadsword and targe, rapier, rapier and cloak, rapier and dagger in the new Italian mode—I acquired some knowledge of them all, and helped to teach them in garrison towns. I had strength of wrist and weight of shoulder-drive, but my father said I was clumsy, and might be clumsier if the buttons were off or edge keened for blood as it sheared.

And, indeed, I met no real sworders to test my skill. We moved only on the fringes of armies, and lived amongst and on that sad and sordid tribe: the camp-followers of armies, that ape and pander to soldiers.

Of life and its sordidness I learned my share in that sorry crew. All my illusions went, but I gained a cynical balance of mind. Evil I knew and good I knew, and I met much of good in many that were evil. And always my graying father watched over me and kept some loyalty and cleanliness alive in me—even at the end, when a growing fondness for the sour country wine was sapping him.

I never once thought of forsaking him and offering my sword where it might be accepted. In pride I say it. For I was a clansman, too, with a clansman's loyalty, and, being young, believed that a place was waiting for me amongst soldierly men.

Then there filtered to us, up from Spain or down from Scotland, rumors of the new fight the united Irish chiefs were waging against Elizabeth. At first my father laughed his grim unbelief. He admitted the fight, but was skeptical of any unity of purpose. He had in mind the days of Shane the Proud, when O'Neill fought the O'Donnells, the Maguires, the Scots of Claneboy, any one, while the wily English took this side and that side to ensure harmlessness by a general ruin. Clan warfare was never done in Erin, and clan warfare made no longer any appeal to a man who had plotted for a queen.

But in time there could be no doubt that this new fight was very nearly a national one. Hugh O'Neill, the queen-made Earl of Tirowen, and young Hugh Roe O'Donnell of Tirconnail had brought all the north into a confederation of power, had beaten the English in pitched battles, and were threatening the very heart of the Pale—Dublin town.

So my father girded his loins afresh and a new light came into his eyes.

"There is work for us over there, David boy," he said. Somehow he still looked upon me as a boy, though I was then in my twenty-eighth year. "Do not believe that the Irish are backward fighters in their own land—as is held. Nothing will stop a charge of heavy-armed clansmen but mailed horse, and only mailed horse have beaten them in open fight. This O'Neill is something more than an ordinary cut-and-thrust leader of wild lads; he seems to have learned the arts of Burleigh and Walsingham while he was at Greenwich Court. And it looks to me that there is good chance the fight will not stay in Ireland. The Highland tie is still strong, and—who kens?—we might set a Scots king on an English throne without waiting for a dead woman's dancing shoes. Let us up and away. We have kin amongst the O'Cahan of Dungiven and will look in on them."

So we crossed the French sea and by devious ways came to Bristol. And there the first thing we learned was that a truce had been made in Ireland and that there was full likelihood of a settlement with the northern chiefs.

My father, used as he was to disappointments, was hit deeply by the blow. Outwardly there was little sign of the wound, but, I think, deep down his last hardihood was sapped. "Well, lad," he said patiently, "since we are so far on the road, we will not turn back." And then a bitterness came into his tone. "But I might have guessed that clan chiefs—earls of a ill-born queen—would not hold steady on one course."

So we went down to Avon Mouth to seek passage to Dublin. One was easy got. The new Lord Deputy to Ireland, Sir William de Burgh, was there outfitting his expedition, and, in addition to the queen's squadron, had impressed every seaworthy boat from Bristol and Bideford. These privateer shipmasters were glad enough to eke out the meager official fee by a little private trade, and the first man we spoke struck a bargain for a brace of pounds—and lost one, as has been told.

It was the gab o' May, and a cold north wind, blowing down from the Welsh mountains, nipped my father with his vitality at lowest ebb. He took to his bed with a shooting pain across the back, made no struggle, turned his face, with a strange loneliness, from me and the world, and was dead in five days. More than that I will not say.

But there I was at a loose end. No longer had I any living loyalty to uphold me, no hate to spur me, no clearly seen object to strive for. I was only David Gordon out of swaddling clothes, for all that I was a grown man—a big, long-legged, sullen lad, without any of the enthusiasms of youth. And lacking these, life is a terrible thing for youth. What had I, then? A purse of twenty gold coins, a long blade of Ferrara, and —nothing more. Once on a time I would have asked for nothing better than a loose foot and that blade to carve a road. But now I knew too much, or I did not know enough. I had to choose my road, and there was no choice that called me like a trumpet.

I could go back to Auchindoun and live the life of a kinsman to a small laird, with a faint prospect of a small place in Edinburgh, and a still fainter one of following James Stewart, that unnatural son, to London town; I could go back to the walled town of Arras, where a certain colonel of pikes had employ for strong shoulders; or I could, no doubt, get a place in this expedition to Ireland, since this Sir Francis Vaughan might be glad of a volunteer, it being evident that the pressed train-bands of Somerset and Devon had no stomach for the work before them.

What else might I do? Ah well! My father was scarcely cold in his grave, and I would be no traitor to him. Let me be loyal for a little while yet and set foot on the road he had pointed. Very like there were cousins of mine amongst the O'Cahan near Derry-Columcill, and, anyway, I could be moving that way without binding myself to any side. To Dublin town, then, would I go, with a mind not yet made up.

It was in that lax spirit that I took passage for Ireland.

CHAPTER II

DUBLIN TOWN

I WENT down to the quay-wall that evening shortly before seven of the clock, my not too heavy traveling satchel slung on shoulder, light purse in breast of cloth doublet, and long Andrea Ferrara at left hip—loneliness in my heart, and none of the hopes of youth to leaven it. Sir Francis Vaughan was on the poop deck with some of his officers. He now wore the sailor's leather headpiece, and had changed his short, scarlet-lined cloak for a long one of blue cloth. Both suited his soldierly face. The tide was full in, and he stood leaning on the rail, looking down at me.

"Dublin town it is, then?" he greeted, gesturing towards the gangway at the waist of the ship. "Come up this way!"

The waist was crowded with buff-coated arque-busiers, and the shipmen were bustling about amongst them at their duties, of which I am very ignorant. Already big brown sails were hanging loosely here and there, and a line of seamen up in the bow were tailing on a rope and marking time to a sea song.

I was at the foot of the poop-stairs, when a voice hailed me. "Hey, master! One-piece passengers in the mainhouse."

It was Diggory, the captain. His eyes were black, and he came to me with a power of truculence. One place was the same as another to me, so I turned away from the poop.

"This way, Master David Gordon," came Sir Francis Vaughan's voice from the stairhead. "My good Diggory, if you will attend to your business of casting-off I will attend to this gentleman for a little while."

Diggory glowered at him and then at me, a heat in his eyes.

"Man," said I peacefully, "forget yon. A Cornish wrestler should take a fall as it comes."

"That was not fair wrestling," he said, scowling.

"No. I was not wrestling that time."

He went off growling, and presently his voice came bellowing from the forepart of his ship.

I mounted the stairs to Vaughan's side.

"The mainhouse is packed like salt fish," he said. "Doubtless there will be a corner up here."

I thanked him kindly.

He laughed his pleasant light laugh, and, taking my arm, led me aside to the rail, away from his officers.

"Do not flatter me," he said. "My kindness has its own meaning. A tall, cool man who uses his head and wears a long sword has much to commend him—in this business we are embarked on. You are better on my queen's side than against her."

"I am on no side."

"As you say. But who seeks fortune in Ireland has to be on one side or the other. Look, Master Gordon, and you will see on which side fortune is!"

I looked out to sea, and the sea was crowded with sails—white and black and red sails, with the green English sea between and the gold path of the sun laid down amongst them.

"De Burgh's fleet. Three thousand veteran soldiers, a couple of thousand stout lads of Devon, and a park of culverin."

"And a truce in Ireland?" My tone was a trace quirky.

He laughed. "Of a sort. The wild Irish must have their lesson this time."

"Or teach one!"

"They might—as at Clontibret not so long ago. Here goes our answer to that, if need be. William de Burgh, fresh from fighting Spain, has a trick or two to astonish the O'Neill." He pointed into the waist of the ship. "There be some five standards of fighting men down there, and you can have your chance of fortune if your mind leans that way."

Here was the direct offer. What would my father have said to that? Nothing. It was not his custom to display his thoughts.

"My queen is a good mistress," said Vaughan, quietly urging. "She has contended against your Scotland, and Spain—and Ireland always, and has beaten them all."

"And men do not trust her."

"Any man that does—for his own ends, not England's—carries a loose head. But, Master Gordon, if you mistrust my queen take this my offer as personal. To tell truth I was greatly taken with you, and I am honestly interested to see how you take to soldiering."

"I am no soldier," I told him.

"You carry a good long blade and a cool head."

"But I am no soldier."

"Be it so. Your attention, Master Gordon. No man like you, sword and habit, may go foot-loose about Dublin and out of it without question. That is only prudence and no threat. Pray consider my offer at your leisure, and let us say no more for the present. Will you accompany me to the after-house and try a stoup of wine?"

At that we left it.

I KNOW nothing about the art of the navigator, and sailing open water does not go well with me. The *Speckled Hind,* rolling and wallowing in that late spring sea, unpleasantly disturbed my internal economy. A short hour after reaching the width of the channel, and during a sideways beat towards the Island of Lundy to clear the Welsh coast, I lost interest in the bonny green sea under the red sunset, and in the fine lift of the Exmoor Forest, the rich color of the sails and the fluttering of the flags of England—in everything. And no interest revived in me for all of three days. Sir Francis Vaughan, accustomed to the steep short seas off the Lowlands and the long steep seas of the Bay in his filibustering as far as Cadiz, made light of this small jabble and of my ailment. He but dosed me with a dry wine spiced with Guinea pepper, and said it was well to have all green humors cleansed out of me.

I came out on deck on the third afternoon, and there was the Irish coast close at hand. A stiff headland thrust itself out into deep water, and behind it, above thick young-foliaged woods, two conical peaks stood up against the sky; away in the north another heathery headland, ribbed with stone, had the sea beating white against its base; and between the two was a flat curve of shore with the river Life flowing sluggishly between sand-banks—and the sunlight, in a soft haze, shining on the dark green of woods, the bright green of sea grass, and making gold of the barren sands.

Most of the fleet anchored in the bay, but the Lord Deputy's ship and a few others—including the *Speckled Hind*—carrying leaders, ventured the river passage to the Dublin Quays. During the last mile the seamen had to take to

the boats and tow, a slow business even with the making tide. It was near sunset before we tied up at Wood Quay, above a strong, double, square tower, and there at last was Dublin town before us on the south bank.

I had expected something outlandish and strange in this citadel of the English Pale; but it looked no different from any other town of similar state that I had sojourned in: just a middle-sized place with a shelter wall to the quays, high roofs behind, and a scatter of houses on the north side of the river. Upstream from us a towered bridge of two arches crossed the water. There was every sign of a thriving sea-trade, comfort, thrift, and a hard-held security.

This evening the town was in gala to welcome the new lord deputy; flags flew, drums beat, silver trumpets sounded, and the populace was down at the waterside to see the show. The merchant, apprentice, and artisan dress was the same that I had seen at Bristol or Dover, and I realized that this city outside the bounds of wild Ireland was but an English town.

I left the ship as soon as I might, satchel on shoulder and sword at hip. Sir Francis Vaughan was busy, and, moreover, I did not want him yet awhile to order my bestowing. He saw me go, and made no effort to stay me; he but waved a gauntlet and called, "See you again, Master Gordon."

Making my way amongst the crowd, I had my first surprise and one small twinge for my father's memory, for the tongue that was spoken around me was not English, but the Gaelic—my mother-tongue. My father and I, speaking together, had always used that tongue. Here now in Dublin it was in general use—and, I believe, a cause of some complaint amongst the loyalists—a broader accent than I was used to and emphasized differently, but still homely and understandable. And yet it sounded strange to hear a man, attired in hose and jerkin and with the unmistakable round and ruddy face of the Saxon, use the wide vowel and the strong guttural.

I made my way through the press towards a turreted tower above a wide arch giving on a steep street of timbered houses. Close to a buttress on the quayside of the arch was the first man I could put finger on as Irish—a tall lean fellow with clean-shaven face and no head covering. His thick red hair was finely combed down on his neck and cut straight across his brows—brows set in a lower above eyes intent on arquebusier and halberdier disembarking on the quay. A long woolen cloak, with hood fallen on shoulders, was thrown back, and bare sinewy arms were crossed on a saffron-brown tunic that reached kneecap, after the fashion of our philabeg. He wore finely-wrought horse boots of yellow leather; his woolen cloak was lined with orange silk, and there was gold and silver work on leather belt. A gallant, tall, grim lad! He carried no weapon that I could see, but then no wild Irishman was allowed weapon within Dublin walls.

Sometimes now I wonder if Providence set that man there to wait for me—and for his fate.

I paused at his shoulder and addressed him in the Gaelic. "Would there be an inn up this street, friend?"

He started, and surprise was in the deep-set eye he turned on me. He looked me up and down, and I waited his answer patiently. "Plenty," he said at last, and shortly. And then thought better of it. "This is the street of wine taverns. There is the Crane close at hand, for a full purse—"

"And—"

"The Pied Horse, near King's Gate, is an honest house."

"My thanks. This way?"

For another moment he turned to look loweringly at the queen's ships, and I saw his jaw muscles ridge and ripple. Then he shrugged his shoulders and turned with me.

"I will show you," he said.

WE WALKED up the slope of the nearly empty street side by side, his head short of mine, but his stride as long as my stride. No townsman this. Once I caught his glance turned aside on me in keen scrutiny. No doubt he was nationally curious about this tall, narrow-eyed, ugly fellow in the feathered bonnet, who spoke a strange Gaelic. I had come off

a queen's ship and wore a long sword, yet I did not seem to be of the ship's company or a queen's man. Now I know that, running in his mind, was the thought that by careful questionings some of the information he wanted might be won from me. Listen to him, then.

" 'Tis said this new Lord Deputy—de Burgh—is a fighting man."

"The Spaniards held him that, 'tis said."

"Fine judges, by all accounts. And he with ten thousand soldiers in his tail?"

"A good many."

"You would think there was never a truce in Ireland," he said something warmly. "Like enough ye will be for harrying us out of the glens before harvest."

"I am for harrying no one."

"In bad company you were, then."

I did not agree or disagree.

"Good it is to be prudent," he said, a little tartly.

"Surely," I agreed.

"Silence is as good as truth, and sometimes no worse than a lie. That saying might be known where you come from?"

"It is."

"You are no Sassenach, then. Here we are, now."

As we turned under the hanging sign of the Pied Horse, in the shadow of the King's Gate, I happened to glance down the slope of street. Women and young people were at the windows waiting for the show, but the street itself was empty except for one man, and him I knew. He was Sir Francis Vaughan's body servant, a big fair fellow out of Essex, named Tom Pybus. He seemed to be in a great hurry, but his hurry had started as I turned my head. He passed by without looking our way, and I followed the Irishman into the wide, low ordinary of the inn.

There were there only the jerkined Anglo-Irish landlord and a saffron-clad man carrying a fine head of flaxen hair. But though the inn was now empty there was not a room to be engaged, and the landlord intimated as much, very bluntly, after a glance at my cloth and leather.

My young conductor flared, but his voice came slow and cold. "That is a lie, my fine fellow."

The landlord did not treat this man rudely. There was respectful fear in his eye, and his hands were apologetic. He protested that the almoner of the Garrison had fore-engaged all his rooms for the officers of the Devon train-bands now disembarking, but the Irishman would not accept that excuse. He had brought me here for lodging, and lodging I would have.

"I dare not," cried the landlord, and then had a bright thought. "Quarters your friend will have if you say it, Lord O'More," he said humbly, "and that is as good as prison-cell for me. But you have my best room, and, with your favor, a pallet—"

"Do not trouble," I stopped him. "I will seek other quarters."

"And not find them," said the landlord, "as long as the queen's soldiers are in garrison."

This Lord O'More looked at me, and there was that speculation in his eye I had noted before. And then that grim face of his smiled pleasantly.

"My name is Colum O'More," said he, "and this is my cousin, Cathal O'Dwyer." The other young Irishman nodded his flaxen head.

I did what was required. "My name is David Gordon," I told him.

"Out of Scotland—the Fifth Province? A long way you are from home, but our race is kin, and you are welcome to share what is going."

The Gael in me responded. And so my very first night in Dublin was spent with two Irish fighting men—it was plain that fighting men they were—from beyond the borders of the Pale.

EIGHT days I spent in Dublin, and then Fate, dim mover of gods and men, set my feet on the road ordained. And in these eight days a friendliness grew between me and the two young Irishmen, or, rather, between the flaxen-haired Cathal O'Dwyer and myself. O'More, with his red hair and grim face and hot eyes, was not a friendly man. He was a man apart, using me for his own purpose, and his own purpose—his one purpose in life—was to hold his land against the English. No doubt he thought the

company of a man who had come off a queen's ship useful company in the inquiries he was making. He was in Dublin, under license, for the apparent purpose of selling native-bred ponies; but though he said little, and I said less, I soon gathered that his main object was to discover the strength and quality of the English reënforcements and their disposal. O'Dwyer and I, shoulder to shoulder, followed him about the city of Dublin, to the lowering Castle with its round bastions, to Greneville Keep, Ostman Gate, the Bull Ring, wherever the soldiers were bestowed, and even I, a stranger, could see that the new army was only in temporary quarters, and that its ultimate disposal meant no good to the doubtful truce that existed.

Young Cathal O'Dwyer was a friendly lad, and got behind my dourness and silent habit; they did not repel him, because he understood them. He took hold of my arm, tossed back his fine flaxen hair, gave me the friendly luster of his gray eye, and talked gayly and openly. In a day or two he made me free of their camp beyond the wall, where a score or so of light wiry men guarded a great herd of ponies on the Fair Green, near the ruined abbey of St. Francis, outside the Bull Ring Gate. He made it plain that, whatever their secret business might be, they were there to sell ponies; and a very good sale they had, too, for their hardy animals—hairy beasts with good legs, a hand higher in the shoulder than the Highland pony.

During these eight days I saw nothing of Sir Francis Vaughan, nor did any one meddle with us or accost us. Once or twice I saw trooper Tom Pybus, and he, with a certain stupidity, avoided seeing me. I realized that I was keeping company with spies and was being quietly spied on; but, with something of fatalism, I let myself drift, for I could not make up my mind, and waited for something to make it up for me. Poor Colum O'More! with your hot eyes and mind set on war, it might be that Fate in the by-going used you for that purpose before she snapped the string for you.

At no time did O'More or O'Dwyer put me a direct question as to my business in Dublin. No doubt they wondered, but it was against their tradition to show an impertinent curiosity. They waited for me to display my mind, and I had none to display.

So I was being quietly watched by both sides.

CHAPTER III

"WE WILL MEET ACROSS THE SHANNON."

MIDDAY of a Saturday and the three of us at meat in the ordinary of the Pied Horse.

Truly the tavern was enjoying full custom. The long table and the cross table were crowded, and some small trestle dining boards had been set in the low window alcoves. The landlord, a prudent fellow, had bestowed us at one of these, for he was none sure that hot Irish chiefs would thole shoulder-rubbing with English officers. I saw no harm or insolence in these young Englishmen. Fresh-faced boys out of Somerset and Devon, raw to war and the ways of dominance, they were boisterous at table, but never discourteous. Rather were they full of curiosity, and looked with something akin to admiration on these fine, bareheaded young chiefs, who had silk lining to their cloaks, gold bosses on their belts, wrought silver on their finely made horse-boots—and no weapon better than the short black knife.

We were eating our manchets of bread and soup, when a loud, arrogant voice from the floor made us turn head. Two men had just come in. One was Sir Francis Vaughan in his courtier dress; the other was a soldier in the panoply of war—ribbed morion and fluted corselet above long boots—and he was showing his teeth in a laugh. His teeth were more noticeable than the laugh. They were strong white teeth, and there was no mirth in the laughter. A superbly tall fellow he was, with upright carriage of head, great shoulders and flat stomach, flaxen mustaches curling up on his ruddy cheekbones, and eyes so light that they looked like polished bosses of limestone. A man you would say at a first glance was handsome and merry—and be only a good judge of looks.

" 'Sdeath! the place is thick with shav-

elings." He said that loud enough for the room to hear.

I turned back to my soup. It was not my part to notice Vaughan, and the loud-voiced man did not interest me. I heard their footsteps come across the floor towards us, but there was no room for any others at our table. A heavy stride stopped close behind my chair, and the loud voice spoke again with contempt in it. "Dublin town's come to a nice pass, Vaughan! Wild Irish at meat with English officers. To your feet, dogs!"

He addressed O'More across the board, and O'More took it well. His cheek bones hardened and his eyes narrowed, but he made no move, and his voice was cold and quiet.

"Our table, foul-mouth," he said in the Gaelic.

The man behind me, as I now know, was a veteran of Irish wars and knew the language. "Ho! Ho!" There was no merriment there. "Stop that dog's gibberish and lap your wash in the corner. —You too, leather-jerkin!" His hand clapped my shoulder, and gripped.

O'More was swifter than I was. A measure of mead was close to his hand, and in one rapid motion he caught and flung it, vessel and liquor, at the fellow's face.

The bully, for all his size, must have been as quick as a cat. I felt a few spatters of moisture, and then heard the vessel clank and roll on the floor behind him. And before I heard that I heard the rasp of steel out of scabbard. The soldier was as quick as that. Oh, but he was deadly quick. For he slew the unarmed Irishman then and there. O'More had not time to push back the heavy chair before the sword point was at his face. The killer knew swording. He feinted quickly at the eyes, brought O'More's arms up, and ran him through the neck—a fierce thrust and recover that sent chair and man over backwards and wrenched blade free.

A great, terrible, wordless cry filled the room. It came from Cathal O'Dwyer. But I had no time to pay any attention to Cathal O'Dwyer. Clumsy my father had dubbed me, and yet Andrea Ferrara was bare in my hand as I twisted to my feet, and the killer's sword was no more than on the recover before I had shortened blade and lunged above the gorget.

He parried it in time and no more. My point ripped his leather collar as he swayed away.

"You too," he cried, his teeth agrin, and he was too busy to say more for a space.

I drove in on him, all the will and force, every atom that was of me and in me gathered to a point. The buttons were off the blades and here was killing. "Kill him! Kill him before these English kill you." Something shouted that through my head loud as thunder, and all that was David Gordon became a close-set vigor behind a driven sword point.

A chair fell over, a table slithered, the blades grated and twisted. I drove him. And there was his throat. My point pinged on the edge of his steel corselet and curved half-circle. The shock threw him back on his heels, and his weapon was only at half-guard. I beat it aside, twisted in the upper circle, and made sure of his open mouth. And even as my blade lunged it was beaten fiercely upward, and Sir Francis Vaughan was between us.

It was as rapid as that. Not as much as half a minute—and in another second . . . That second was over now and he was still alive, but my concentration still held. I was so sure that I was to die in that room under the swords of the English that now I swung to face them, sword on guard and feet set.

No one made any move at all. All these young officers stood or sat acrouch, shocked surprise and anger in their eyes, but their eyes were not set on me. They watched that big brute of their own, and here and there came a murmur that was on the brink of the fighting growl.

I might have known. It is only the veteran in Ireland, embittered by endless and very deadly fighting, by intrigue, by the constant strain of maintaining supremacy over a breed not at all suppressible, that acquires an unnatural brutality—a ruthlessness that has much of fear in it. This war in Ireland was not a gallant affair.

I turned to Sir Francis Vaughan. His back was to me as he faced O'More's

"To your feet, dogs!"

slayer. Then some one came at my side and I heard a hard-drawn breath. Cathal O'Dwyer was crouching at my hip, his hand in the breast of his saffron tunic and his eyes on Vaughan. I knew he carried a long knife under his armpit and was going to kill or be killed. I caught him at the elbow and pulled him upright against my shoulder.

"Not yet," I whispered. "Not now."

He looked upward into my face, a terrible agony in his eyes.

"Let me die," he whispered back. "Let me die now."

I shook him. "We will kill him at the World's End."

He relaxed against me, and we heard Vaughan speaking above the clamor.

"This is not finished, Captain Cosby." His voice was strong. "You will hear of it—"

"Only spawn, Sir Francis!" His voice was as loud as ever, but his cheeks twitched and were ashen.

Vaughan stamped his foot. "You are under arrest. Hold yourself at the castle until word comes from de Burgh. Go, now."

And Cosby went, thrusting his sword, stained as it was, into sheath and throwing his head up in bravado. Vaughan pivoted so that he was still between us, and the big fellow looked back at me over his shoulder.

"Another day, you dog," he threatened.

I said nothing, but at that instant I could have told him out of some strange vision that his life was for my plucking when the time came.

The room was watching me now—Vaughan and me facing each other. We looked each other full in the eye and said no word. So bitterly did I feel that I was ready to cross swords with this gallant and try my best to spit him.

His eyes left mine at last and looked behind me at the floor.

"Will you see to your friend, Master Gordon?" he requested quietly.

There was no more to be said and nothing else to do.

UPSTAIRS in our room poor Cathal O'Dwyer, grinding one hand into the other, bent over the couch whereon lay the body of Colum O'More under silken-lined cloak. "O God! O God! O God!" He spoke low and desperately. "What will the clan say? How will I tell the clan!

"What will your clan do?" I put to him.

A red flame leaped in him for a moment. "A thousand will die for this." But the desperate mood flowed over him again. "But he is dead—dead—and nothing matters. Why did we not die killing, David Gordon?"

"Easy enough to die in Dublin town, brother, but not killing!"

The door behind us opened and shut, and Sir Francis Vaughan was in the room. We turned and faced him.

"I am grieved that this happened," he said at once, his high-crowned hat in his hand.

"Why did you beat up the sword at its work, Sassenach?" Cathal cried at him, his hand coming up to his breast.

Vaughan looked at me.

"I am sorry for that too," he told me, and seemed anxious that I should know his motive. "What else might I do? I saved Captain Cosby's life, but I saved yours too. This is Dublin town, and if you had killed him, not even de Burgh could have saved your head from Hanging Gate."

This was true enough, but I was not in the mood to acknowledge it.

"Who is this man Cosby?" I asked him bluntly.

"Captain Sir William Cosby, Governor of Cong and Hy-Maay in Connacht."

Surely. We could tell him the names of all the Connacht loyalists who had hasted to Dublin for a council with the new Lord Deputy: Sir Conyers Clifford, Bingham of Galway, Clanricard, Dunkelin, O'Connor Roe, and the killer Cosby. The dead man had gleaned that knowledge and was beyond all use of it.

"You will forgive me for intruding," Vaughan said then, "but I would warn you that you are no longer safe here." He looked at O'Dwyer and spoke shortly. "You, O'Dwyer, had better be back in your hills with your men and horses—and your chief there. And for you, Master Gordon—" He paused. "You have been keeping unsafe company, but I have three choices to offer you—" He paused again, and I waited patiently. "The first ship out of Dublin, a strong lodging in Bermingham Tower, or—the third choice you know."

Even as he spoke I had made my choice—and it was none of his three. But I had learned to hold my tongue in narrow places, and I but gestured towards the couch. "No place for choosing," said I. "Tomorrow—"

"Tomorrow I leave for Portmore in the Gap-of-the-North, and Cosby has the ear of de Burgh. Tomorrow you may have no choice."

"Tomorrow you will know my choice," I said evenly.

He looked at me long and steadily, as if trying to get behind the ugly mask of my face.

"Let it be," he said at last, shrugging his shoulders. "You have a strong sword-arm, but it is not as long or as strong as my queen's. She will hold you within the Pale or thrust you outside it as it pleases her, and I warn you not to be rash. We hold you securely, Master Gordon."

Without another word he left us. Now I knew where I stood. He had given me my orders. The stakes were on the board and the dice loaded, and I set my dour Scots jaw against compulsion.

WITHIN an hour I went out of Dublin by the Bull Ring, behind the last of Colum O'More. He lay under his cloak on a bier borne by four men of his clan. Cathal O'Dwyer and his kerns marched behind, and Dublin town looked on, silent and aloof.

I brought up the rear. I was without sword or cloak, and carried my feathered bonnet in my hand, for all men to see that I had no other motive in going beyond the walls than respect for a man who had befriended me, a stranger. But Andrea Ferrara, that dumb one that knew only one tune, lay by the dead man under his cloak, and my traveling satchel was hidden there too. It was well. Near Audoen's Gate I saw the man Pybus out of the tail of an eye and knew that he would follow as far as he might. With the help of God I would lead him far and hard.

Never did I see men more stricken than the Irish clansmen in their camp outside St. Francis Abbey. They made no wailings, but their shoulders were shrunken, their heads bowed, and their voices, that had been so gay always, had a quiet somber depth more grievous than tears. But, now and then, one and another looked up at Dublin Wall with its hanging tower lowering down, and jaw muscles clenched and a long breath lifted sunken shoulders.

God help this English town if ever it lay at the mercy of the Glens! Indeed and indeed, war in this land was no gallant thing.

In the short time that had elapsed since the death of the young chief the camp had already been broken, the gear collected, and the pack ponies loaded. By nightfall these men would be back on the hills; tomorrow all the Glens would know; next day no man of the Pale would be safe south of the Dodder River.

For a space Cathal O'Dwyer was busy with his camp affairs, and I moved about by myself. I loitered back by the fair-green, keeping an eye lifting, and saw no sign of Tom Pybus or any man I could put down as English. But as I watched behind a booth, a small troop of horses came clattering out of the Bull Ring Gate and took the south road towards

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the first green lift of the hills. I stood looking after them. That was the kerns' road too. These soldiers might have no concern with me, but they were on one of the roads I might go, and must be considered along with another road that might be guarded. So considering, I walked back to the camp and found Cathal O'Dwyer waiting for me.

Already he was a changed man. The killing had shocked his soul off balance. He was no longer the gay lad with the flaxen locks atoss and the laughing gray eye. There was no color in his face and his eyes were sunken; life seemed to have receded deep down in him.

"We are ready now, David Gordon," he said, his voice drawing slow and toneless. "You will come with us?"

"No, Cathal," I told him. "I go another road."

He looked towards Dublin.

"I am not going back," I told him. "I go north."

"North!" He livened a little at the word. "Where freedom is. Ah! but it is a long road, and the gap is well guarded."

"It is the road I go. I will tell you now that I am half Irish. My mother was an O'Cahan of Dungiven. I go there."

"A strong clan. Young Donal Ballagh, the chief, is a namely man. Always I knew that you were one of our own. Listen, friend! My life hangs by a thread. I should have died back there. See the men's eyes when they look at me. This night my life may be asked and given. Given—that is easy!"

I put my hand on his shoulder. "Come with me, then."

"No, I must face the clan. It is the law. If I do not die I will be a wandering man till I kill Cosby. That is the law too." He looked close into my eyes. "If you meet him do not kill him unless you are pressed and I am dead. Word will come to you wherever you are, and if my work is undone I put it on you, blood brother."

"I take it," I said firmly, and went on. "I want you to arrange the payment of my reckoning at the Pied Horse, and I want you to sell me a horse and a cloak—"

"Anything the clan owns is yours. . . . If fair play was given you—O Mary! Only another second and you had him. What is the good—what is the good? He is dead and my heart withered. Come, brother!"

He chose me a chestnut-red mare, five years old and fifteen and a half hands at the shoulder, a broad-backed lady with good legs.

"Her name is Benmee," he told me, his hand in her black mane, "cross-bred out of a Norman stallion, and she is trained to arms. The longest day she will carry you and the spark not quenched in her. Ride her with the knee only and use her mouth softly. I trained her that way to leave a man's hands free for hilt. You will grow fond of her."

Fond and fond of her I grew, many a long day.

And then he fitted me with the dead man's traveling-cloak. Alas! the yellow-lined one that covered him had his life-blood stains on it. The traveling-cloak of the Irish is the finest campaigning-cloak I know. This one of mine was of close woven wool, dyed crotal brown and lined with marten skins. Tall as I was, it fell from neck to heel, was of generous width, and carried a hood to pull over the head in night camp.

Cathal would take no money other than what was required to pay my tavern reckoning, and I dared not press it on him. And at the end he led me to the edge of the camp, and, as I sat on Benmee, placed his hand on my thigh and looked into my eyes.

"The knowledge is in me that we will meet again, David Gordon," he said. "Where or how, I do not know. Listen, now. Make your own road north, keeping to the byways and wood-paths." And thereupon he advised me closely on the long way I must go and the dangers to be faced. At the end he pressed my thigh. "Trust no man who lives in a stone dun," he said; "but men who sleep in huts you can trust for one night or for longer—if they are on the right side. Once across the ford at Portmore you are in O'Neill's country and may ride openly any road, and no one to challenge you, and you riding in peace. That is all I can tell you, David Gordon—and if God is good to me we will meet across the Shannon."

His was the wine of advice.

CHAPTER IV

MY OWN ROAD

BEHOLD me, then, that pleasant afternoon in May weather, riding my strong-backed, chestnut-red Benmee westwards through the open woods along the Esker ridge outside Dublin, my knees a-grip back of her elbow and my long shanks wagging comfortably. I rode the Irish saddle, which is stirrupless and no more than a felted pad girthed behind the withers. I was at home on such a saddle. All my youth I had ridden the Highland shelt barebacked, and knew the art of leaning back on easy roads, and the grip of knee that gives the arms free play.

That day I had seen a man die, had felt the nerve-loosening desire to kill, had looked on the broken grief of a man I liked, and was myself come into the narrow ways of danger. Yet for the first time in my life I knew the fine content of a definite purpose. At last I was my own man going my own road, a good mare between my knees, a fine sword yet to blood, money in my purse, a long cloak against the night, food for two days—oaten bannock and collops of veal—and adventure beckoning me on the road. I might die on that road; I might die at the end of it; but it was the road I myself had chosen. I tugged the hilt of my sword to the front. I was on the road—to fortune or the world's end. I was in tune with the sun and the spring, and my heart lifted with the blackbird's song.

All the half dozen miles to Leamcan I kept within the fringes of the woods—oak trees in early leafage mixed with the dark plumes of pine and the still budding boughs of ash. When, at last, the Esker slanted to the river I went still more warily, for here the risk began. Where the Life curved was the long slant of a mill-weir, and some distance below rose the stone face of the mill with the big wheel hanging idle over the lade. I could hear the soft rush of water over the weir, and in the still, sunny afternoon it was a pleasant and sleepy sound, and, somehow a little lonesome.

From the lift of ground I judged the crossing higher up, and edged along the flank of the ridge out of sight of a strong tower close to the river, until I saw the broken water of the ford gleaming between the branches. From the shelter of the trees I examined the ground I had to go over. A slope of grass ran down to the ford, and beyond it a thick clump of sallies grew down to the edge of the water. Behind that the brae, heavily wooded, rose steeply, and the green solid curves of the tree-tops fringed the blue of the sky.

I looked upstream and down. There was no one in view. Now was the time. I gave Benmee a touch of knee, rode boldly down the slope, and splashed into the water.

And as I splashed out on the other side, a big man on a big horse came out from behind the sallies directly in my path. And the big man was Trooper Tom Pybus, dressed for war—buff coat, peaked casque, and long sword—but the sword was still in scabbard. And as I brought Benmee to a halt two more troopers edged out of the clump. Three to one!

Vaughan had given me good measure and flattered my prowess. Three to one, and back to Dublin city and worse! It looked like that.

Pybus was a plain Saxon man and not given to heroics. He saluted me with a decent show of respect.

"My master, Sir Francis Vaughan," said he, "wants word with you, Master Gordon, in Dublin town."

I kept my hands still, though my heart beat, and looked about me. There were no more than the three. Three were enough, surely; yet it was well for me that Vaughan was not come himself. My plight was desperate enough, but the notion of being led back to Dublin like a sheep never entered my head. I think that I was, somehow, glad that the test had come. For eight years I had been moribund, and now I was alive, and life was worth the risk. Here was the risk surely.

One thing I had learned in eight years' wandering: that a man does not go far if action lags behind decision. I said no word at all. Tom Pybus, tower-

ing above me on the slope, a slow man on a heavy English horse, waited patiently for my answer, already sure of it. He got it, and it surprised him.

My blade was out of scabbard and poised in one long draw that had the song of steel in it. My knees pressed Benmee, and gallantly she responded, ears back and neck forward. She charged up the slope directly at the big horse, and Pybus had no time even to yell. Instinctively he pulled his off-rein and clawed for his hilt, and he was still clawing as I brushed by him. My blade was up and on the swing, back-hand—that terrible late cut that has no guard and shears heads like a lad shearing thistles—but I did not shear the head of Tom Pybus. Instead, I let the flat of the blade come not ungently across his bluff shoulders, and rode on.

I heard a bark of laughter from one of the troopers, and looked back over the curve of a shoulder. One was laughing, indeed, as he swung his horse awkwardly, but the other was wrestling with the lock of an arquebus. I crouched over Benmee's withers and gave her voice and rein, and she took the slope like a bird. We were near the head of it when the bellow of the shot roared amongst the trees. It was badly aimed, for I did not hear the whistle of the lead, and not even a leaf fell.

And that finished that small adventure.

BENMEE and I had no difficulty in evading the pursuit, if pursuit there was. We were westwards of the cultivated lands round Dublin, and all that Meath border was thickly wooded and in places marshy. The heavy English horses lacked pace in such a country, and we soon got beyond sight and sound of them. Still we hurried, with the sun at my left shoulder, and never slackened till we got down on the soldiers' road to Trim. That we crossed safely, after a careful scrutiny. By then the sun was behind the trees; and the sky was red with the death of the day when we came to a strong stream gurgling between low banks of grass and iris. This, I judged, was the Tolka, and we crossed it and followed it up in the airt we were going till we came to a clump of larch in young foliage. We were now well away from all roads, and here I decided to camp.

First I unsaddled and unbridled Benmee, and let her roll herself fresh on a patch of dry soil. Then I tied her out to nibble a patch of short grass near the water, while I sat down on the bank to eat my supper frugally—one bannock and a rib of veal. As I ate I watched her mouth the grass daintily and switch her long black tail. I must be kind to this bonny mare of mine. She was a generous little lady, and never failed to answer knee and voice. The black points to her chestnut-red looked well, and her eyes were wide-set on a small head. As she nibbled she kept edging nearer to me, as if she liked my company. In a day or two now she would come to know me and lip a bannock out of my hand, and we would talk to each other as we went along the road to far Dungiven, the dun of Donal Ballagh O'Cahan, my cousin.

After supper I groomed her and, now that she was cool, led her to drink, and thereafter plucked fresh herbage for her. By then it was full dusk, and I tied her out on the fringe of the larches and myself went in amongst the trees. Wrapped from neck to heel in my fine cloak and with the hood drawn up, I lay on my back in the crotch of a root and looked up along the lean trunk at the dim crown of the tree, through which a star glinted down from a far-away pale sky. And I reviewed my day. Life had begun for me at last. Twice that day I had drawn sword—and my sword was still clean. I was not sorry for that now. All my old weary life—or lack of life—was behind me, and tomorrow I would start life afresh, facing strange and twisty roads with I-knew-not-what at the end of them. But if there was fight against the English, in that fight would I be; and if fortune came my way, I would take it; and if death took me, I would hope to be no craven, for death is a soldier's part and his meed, and no soldier should hope to draw old breath. David Gordon, fighting man! That was I. Of love I

did not think at all. There I was cynical and wary, for the women that follow armies do not feel romance, and these were the only women I knew—or did not know.

There was no breath of air, yet the fronds of larch sighed to themselves, and here and there in the wood were small sounds of the life of small things—a quiet sigh, a quiet rustle—and quietly I fell asleep.

I wakened in the late dawn to the blackbird's song, a clear strong whistle that drowned the finches' chatter. Long unused to camping in the open, I was stiff and chilled, and the wan light of day-before-the-sun put something of somberness on me. But the blackbird's song had a stir to it, and in a minute the mavis came thrilling, and I was heartened to take the drastic course to make blood run freely. I stripped and plunged into a pool, let the runnel of a small cascade pour over me, and came out to run along the bank and slap myself till I was dry and glowing. Breakfast then, and the saddling of Benmee, who was lively and already beginning to know me. And so I turned head northward and away.

. . . and that finished that small adventure.

I TOOK all of eight days to reach the Ulster border—O'Neill's line—on the Blackwater beyond Armagh. By the soldiers' road to Dundalk and the Gap-of-the-North it might be done in three, but following O'Dwyer's advice, I kept well wide of all made roads and steered a course of my own by the sun. I was in no great hurry, and canny going was safe going. Moreover, the line I took was no easy one. Mostly it lay through a wilderness of heavy woods, thick under growth, and dangerous green marshes. Here was a land that was fast going back to a wild state after forty years of ravage by raid and counter-raid. Time and again, following a faint track, I came on the ruins of townships sinking down into the clay and grown over with brambles. In no place at all did I come on any real sign of husbandry. Like all races who live hardly and in constant peril of war, the clans had become pastoral. They lived by their herds and on their herds and on the game produce of the woods.

I avoided all habitations until my store of provisions was finished, for it was well to get as far as I might from Dublin before putting my kind to the test of hospitality. On the forenoon of the third day, in a lumpy country of bare knolls and marshy hollows, somewhere on the borders of Uriel, I made my first venture. I struck a narrow kine-trodden track with peathags on one

side and stunted pine-woods on the other, and followed it up. It wound in and out on sound ground among quaggy marshes, and in time rose up over the shoulder of a stony knowe. And from there I looked into a small cup of a valley with pasturage on the brae-side and cultivated patches in the hollow—a quiet and pleasant small valley, sleepy under the midday sun. At the far end, under a beetle of rocks, was a township of, maybe, a score of bothies, strung out in one straggling line.

Any stranger coming into that valley had to come by road, and could be seen in good time by watchful eyes. Even as I came over the knowe a man came out before the street and stood watching, and here and there women and children disappeared into black doorways. I rode down quietly and peacefully, but I was careful to pull forward hilt under the cover of my cloak, for I had no inkling how these wild Irish might act toward a lone stranger.

And yet it was so like a Highland scene that confidence did not altogether leave me. Hillside and vale, long-horned cattle grazing, the smoke oozing from the vents of the clay bothies—I might be at home in a little Highland glen; and when I came nearer there was the same reek of peat and the same not unpleasant odor of cow-byre, and a big hound came forward barking, and he was very twin to a brindled deer-hound I owned as a boy.

The man waited for me, and he was the only man in sight. A tall old fellow he was, wearing a crotal tunic, cross-strapped trews, and rawhide brogans; with a lined, worn face below shaggy gray hair, and one of his ears split in two by an old wound. He stood looking up at me, and, sitting at ease—yet warily—on Benmee's broad back, I looked down at him. I gave him good-day, and in return he gave me God and Mary's blessing.

"A friend," said he, then. "Is there any news with you?"

"Not a word," said I. "Is there any with yourself?"

"Indeed no. Maybe you could tell us if they have struck in at the fighting—the Sassenach."

"The truce still holds," I answered.

"But not for long, by all signs." He threw his hand back towards the bothies. "There is not a man left in the street—if it is men you are looking for."

"I am looking only for my dinner, father."

"To that you are welcome, surely," he said readily. "There is the hind-quarter of a late-dropped bull-calf in the pot, and a man's share and a guest's share is yours and welcome. Come down off your fine mare, tall hero."

So I lighted down, keeping an eye on the house doors. Here and there women peeped out, and children looked round their hips. No men, not even old men, did I glimpse.

"We will put the mare in the park," said my host.

The park was one of two stone-fenced fields in the bottom of the valley. It grew a short green herbage, and Benmee whinnied as she saw it. As I unsaddled her she made a playful nip at me and, when head-free, kicked up her heels, galloped half-circle to the end of the field, and began cropping busily. Leaving saddle and bridle slung on the fence, we walked back to the old man's house. It was no larger than any of the others, though I gathered he was chief-man and Brehon-judge of the village.

I bent head under the low lintel behind him. I did not know what I might be entering into in the half-light. Back in Dublin there was talk that Ireland outside the Pale was full of brigands, and that a stranger's throat was cut oftener than not. But I had no reason yet to mistrust this old man, and if one must venture, one must venture to the full. The risk of being set on in the half-dusk inside was the risk I had to take for my dinner, and dinner I must have—and there was an end to it.

I RAN no risk at all. There was a peat-fire in the middle of the floor, with a big black skillet abubble on a crook over it, and from it a fine odor of veal and peat. There was a layer of smoke four feet off the ground, and a trickle of it came through the doorway, and a small trickle of it went up through the

black-edged vent in the roof. There were a trestle bench, a few creepie stools, a round boss of stone, a block of bog-oak, and no other furnishing that I could see. And of people there were an old crone, a young pleasant-faced woman, and three sturdy half-naked children. They sat a-crouch out of the smoke, and I did likewise as soon as I might. And they made me welcome. I might be back in a bothy in Glenfiddich.

Into a big wooden ashet on the trestle bench the young woman poured the smoking contents of the black skillet, and there was, not one, but two quarters of veal. And we all sat round and ate, and sopped the gravy with bannocks of bread. The guest got first choice, and took it as a guest must, cutting off a browned slice high up on the thigh with his short *sgian,* and passing the knife to the old man, who chose the next best cut judiciously. And in a short while there was nothing left but two long bones, and these the brindled hound took out of doors, where, presently, we heard him fight furiously with a brother.

We Gaels were always famous eaters of meat. At that time, and for a few years after, there was plenty in Ireland, and that plenty was used lavishly. Milk, meat, strong-flavored butter, and boiled ox-blood—these were staple foods, and reared big-boned men and round-bosomed women.

At the end of eating the old man went fumbling in a corner, and came back with a cow's horn full of a pale liquid. He proffered it to me. "There is no harm in it," he told me. "'Tis mild and old."

It was usquebaugh, flavored with wild honey, and though old, it had retained the fire of youth. It made throat and eye smart, but I took my share manfully as required by ritual, and the old fellow left a bare mouthful at the bottom for the crone.

We went outside after food. The Gael tholes ill within doors while the sun is above ground, and that is why his dwelling is no more than a makeshift against night and weather. He is forced in this gray north to burrow in a clay bothy shaped not unlike a tent.

Now that I had broken bread, what men there were came out into the open. They were mostly old, and, after their habit, strolled to hear what news was going where my host and I leaned on the wall of the pasture.

And talk went back and forth, of the outside world.

Vaughan sat still in his saddle and looked at me.

One son of my host—"father of the clan back there," he said—had been levied on the queen's side, and another, to escape that levy, had run off and joined Wat Tyrell, O'Neill's ally, at Loch Ennil.

"If war is in it," said he, "two brothers will be at the killing, as has happened before now. If myself was young—" He fingered his slit ear.

"You got that in fight?" I put in.

"I did so—from a Scots hired soldier of Sorley Boy McDonnell's that time Shane O'Neill came down on the Maguires over beyond. A claymore he had, and the haft of my sparth-ax broken."

"A bad day for the Maguires," said another ancient. "Ye were well beat that day Eoghan?"

"Ay, were we! But Hugh Maguire had the sound drop in him, and he came back in his own time. I was there that day too, Rick."

"If you were on Maguire's side now," I said hintingly, "you would be on O'Neill's side too."

He never turned head to me, but answered cryptically. "That is the side I would be on, surely—and whatever side I might be on I might be on the same side as yourself, tall man."

"You might." I was cryptic too. "While the truce lasts I am paying a visit to my cousin, O'Cahan of Dungiven."

"Ay! I thought you had the northern Gaelic. A namely clan. 'Tis said young Donal Ballagh led three hundred gallowglasses at Clontibret."

"The slow road you are taking," put in the old fellow called Rick, who had a sharp-set tongue.

"It suits me well." I looked at my old host. "What road would you take yourself?"

"Well, now"—he rubbed his chin—"'tis like enough I would take the road yourself is on—if I was wanting to see a sept of O'Neill and he a friend of mine." He pointed a finger. "Over there is Drogheda, and up there is Dundalk, and nearer here is Donamain, and if the soldiers did not rob you the Stokes would be putting you puzzling questions—and the lie not always handy."

"And tomorrow and next day?"

"I will tell you. Over there, north by west, is MacMahon country—a pleasant place and a pleasant people, given to drinking *coirm* ale, but bogged in the marshes you would be on the road. Here, now, you are on the height of ground and only small streams to cross, and straight north from here are small townships of O'Duffys and O'Nuallans, who would be for hurting no one and he rightly inclined. That's the road till you cross the Blackwater into O'Neill's country, where no one at all troubles a stranger who would be a cousin to O'Cahan."

And that is the road I took, taking my time to it. I rode circumspectly, and was careful of my little mare, and made acquaintance with the people of the soil. I ate with them, slept with them, held converse with them, and found them sib to the marrow of their bones. No man did me hurt or sought to do so, for I was one of their own, passing through on his own business and taking, as a matter of course, the share that was due to him.

I met no English soldier on that road. The power of the English queen did not reach in here. Indeed, it did not touch me until I had crossed the Blackwater and thought myself safe in O'Neill's country.

I CROSSED the Blackwater within a mile of the mud fort of Portmore, at that time held precariously for the queen by one Captain Williams, a tough-grained man of Wales. I did not waste any time looking for an easy crossing, for away on my right I could make out the low green mounds of the outer earthworks of the fort. The country was level thereabouts, and the garrison had cut down the woods to guard against surprise. I was in plain view of any one who might be on the watch, and many an escape had been frustrated a mile or more on the side of seeming safety. So I gave Benmee rein across the open, the first she had got since Life side, and she stretched herself out at her gallantest pace. In a matter of ten minutes we were into a scattered plantation of pine

and out of it again on a rolling dry heathland.

Now I was surely safe in Ulster, with Dungannon, the stronghold of O'Neill, scarcely a day's ride away. I drew Benmee down to a walk, rode in between two round knowes, ambled round a curve —and there, not more than a hundred paces away, were two horsemen riding towards me!

I pulled Benmee in so sharply that she swerved half round, and then the horsemen saw me and came spurring. In the Highlands no man turns back if he wants luck on his road, and turning back now meant facing the border. I hesitated, and while I hesitated the riders came nearer, and with a sudden stound of heart I recognized them. They were Sir Francis Vaughan and his man Pybus. The right thing to have done then was to go galloping back around the belly of the curve and take to slanting northwards when I had the chance. Benmee had it in her to show clean heels to the big English horses, and there was no sense in risking capture so near safety. Yet some dour spirit held me there, some deep-down distaste of turning my back on this Englishman of mettle, who was never unfair and for whom I had a respect. So I squared Benmee round to them and waited. All I could do was to throw back my long cloak, so that Vaughan could see I carried a long sword, but had not yet touched hilt of it. They pulled up before me at honest distance, Pybus behind his master.

"Well met," cried Vaughan pleasantly. "You have been long on the road."

"Thanks to you, Sir Francis Vaughan," I gave back.

He laughed. "I ask your pardon. Three thick-pates made a poor compliment, and I am sorry you did not cut the thickest off at the neck."

I saw Tom Pybus grin, an honest and faithful man; and in memory of that day by the Life Ford he kept his beast tight-reined with one hand, and held the other across his waist close to his hilt. He rode a wide Flanders gelding, and on the crupper of the saddle before him was strapped a hawking-frame, whereon were perched a brace of goshawks, hooded and tasseled. Sir Francis himself carried a gerfalcon on his gauntleted wrist and wore the green hawking-tunic and plumed cap of the cult. His only weapon was a light rapier a-swing at thigh, while Pybus wore his trooper's clumsy blade. All this I took in of instinct, and at the same time made sure that no other riders were in the reach of valley behind them. This meeting, then, was a chance one, and my luck might hold. And yet a wave of bitterness came over me that luck should play me this prankish trick at this juncture. Curse luck! That bitterness steadied me.

"Are you not on the wrong side of the Blackwater, Master Gordon?" Vaughan inquired banteringly, yet bitingly.

"And you too, Sir Francis?"

"No! My queen owns all this Ireland. In her name might I invite you back to Portmore."

He was making play with me now, and the Gael in me did not like it.

"I am on my way to visit cousins of mine up north," said I, "and I would like them to be with me when I visit you at Portmore."

"How many?" asked he, with understanding.

"A thousand," said I, "and maybe one or two more.'

"One or two too many," he said, and laughed, and then he grew serious and his eye firmed on mine. "So you have made your choice at last—or was it your choice from the beginning?"

"No," said I. "I had made no choice until your friend, Captain Cosby—"

"No friend of mine," he stopped me quickly. "Perdition to him!"

There was silence then. This soldier and courtier was never so slow of speech. I think that he was perplexed, for his eyes frowned and his hand came up and stroked the hooded head of his falcon. Somehow he had a feeling for me, and it did not suit well with his loyalty to his queen.

Myself was growing restless inside. I was too near Portmore, and two of the enemy were more than enough. At last he lifted his head.

"David Gordon," said he seriously,

"will you keep a fair truce with me?"

"Gladly."

"Go your road, then, but plight me your honor that you will say no word of what you have seen or heard at Bristol or Dublin."

I did not take two breaths to consider that.

"No," I said, "I will not pledge honor to that."

"Then you are finally against my queen." His voice hardened. "And I must ask you to come back with me to Portmore."

"Your reason is a poor one—"

"The reason of two against one! You have no choice, and I do not want to draw sword on you."

"I know that," said I, "but here is your excuse for you."

And there was the blue-gleaming shine of my sword as it took the sun and the small keen tone of its song.

Vaughan was a quicker man than his servant. The gerfalcon fluttered down on the heather, and the rapier was out as soon as the Ferrara.

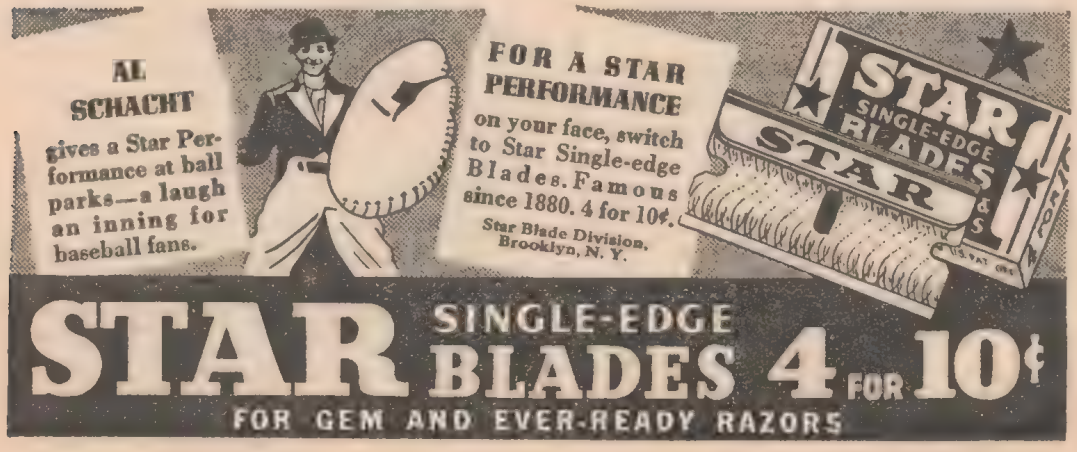
"This is folly," I said, in a final effort to be pacific. "Let us go our own roads."

For answer he drove his big charger at me, his light weapon at point. Now, a rapier on horseback is a childish weapon against even a raw swordsman with a Ferrara blade. He had to get home with his first thrust or have his guard smashed through. Pybus was still tugging out his stiff blade as Vaughan came in, lunging cleanly like a swordsman. I swerved handy Benmee aside with a knee, and as he recovered his blade, shore off the point of it. And there was Sir Francis Vaughan reining back his horse and my point at his throat, and his eyes steeled for the prick. But I recovered blade to the salute, and—"Look to yourself!" he warned.

Pybus was coming down on me with intent to kill, his teeth bare, fury in his eyes—and dismay too, for he thought his master already dead. He launched the full swing of his blade at me, a terrific head-smashing blow. But I saw it coming from away behind his shoulder and glanced it carefully over my bonnet feather, and as he went past, bent flat over empty hawking-frame by his own violence, I gave him his deserts. I used the flat as I had at Life Ford, but I let him have the full weight of it across buff shoulders, so that he fell on his horse's neck, and the next bound of the beast somersaulted him into the heather.

And then I did what I should have done in the beginning. I gave Benmee her head, and we went belly-to-earth northwards up the curve of the valley. At the turn I swung in the saddle for a look. Pybus, at a stout trot, was trundling away after his gelding, and Vaughan sat still in his saddle and looked after me. I lifted my sword to him, and he threw up his broken blade in a gesture of farewell and salutation. A gallant man of the English.

(to be continued)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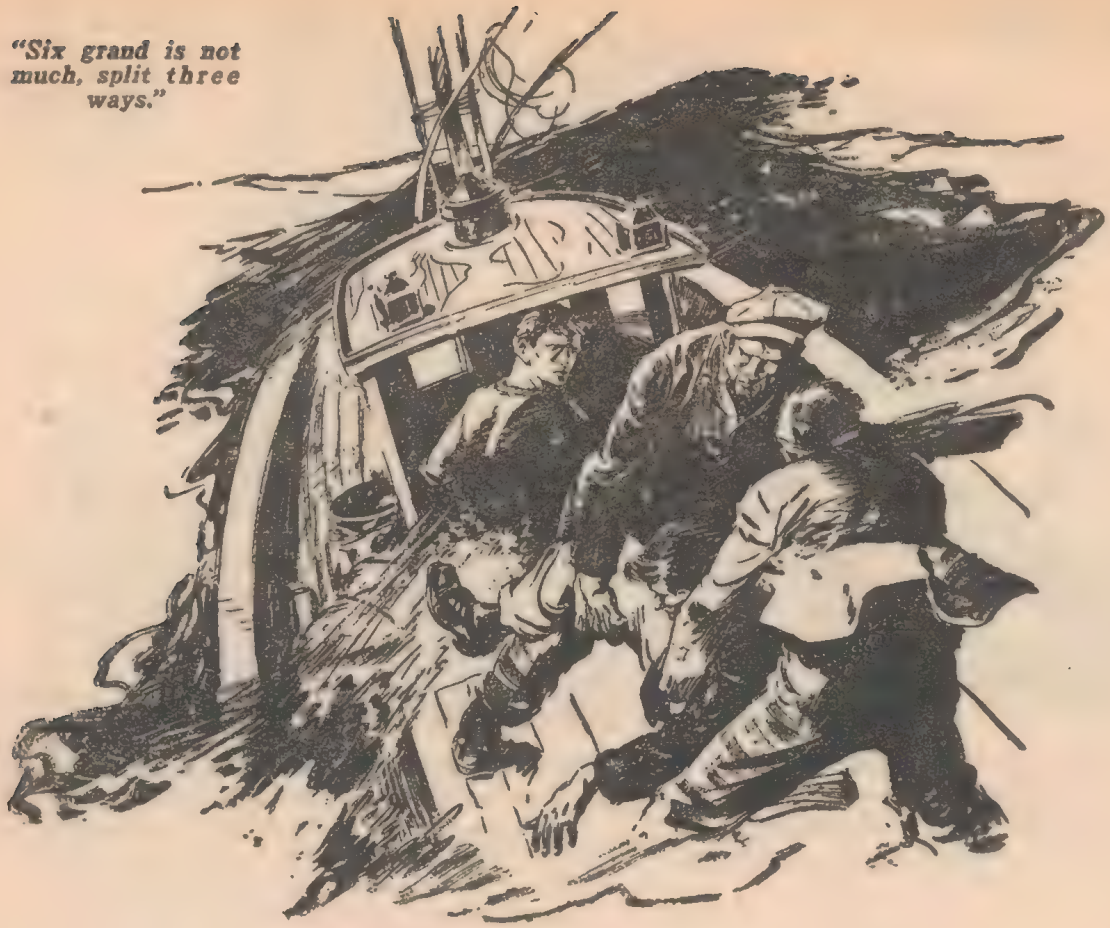


"Six grand is not much, split three ways."

MAN OVERBOARD

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

CURLED in his bunk, Bill Tollman dreamed he was on the uneasy heave of Thirty-mile Bank, being tugged up to the *Iron Duke's* stern by a huge salmon, who said to another salmon standing by on his broad spotted tail: "By golly, the season's openin' good. I hooked me a man, first pass!"

The great fish stood in the *Iron Duke's* cockpit like a proper salmon troller. He held the line tight in one fin. Bill could feel himself struggle against the drag of the hook in his mouth. He was looking up so that he could see the gill covers of the great fish flutter. The salmon poked at Bill's head with the end of a piece of pipe Bill used to club salmon. Bill could feel that cold ring on his temple. The round, unwinking eyes of the huge fish regarded him with triumph.

It was so utterly absurd, a spring salmon, his silver scales shining in the sun, working in the cockpit of the *Iron Duke*, hauling a fisherman up to gaff, that Bill Tollman laughed in his sleep.

That amused chuckle brought him into that nebulous state between sleeping and waking.

And he could still feel that cold round ring of iron against his head. There was a puzzling reality about it. Instinctively Bill tried to brush it away.

His hand was caught firmly. Something round and hard and cold *did* press against his temple. A voice, and it was not the hoarse watery croak of a dream-salmon, said:

"Don't move. Lay still or I blow the top of your head off!"

Bill Tollman lay still. Wide awake

now, clearly conscious of a gun at his head, a hand on his mouth, a dim form beside his bunk. No dream this. But it didn't make sense.

The ground swell running in around both ends of an island rocked the *Iron Duke* gently, as it had rocked Bill Tollman to sleep along with sixty other salmon trollers at anchor in the bight. Bill lay on the outside of the fleet, because he had been among the last to unload a catch that night. The day had started a killing. The first coho salmon had appeared in a big school offshore. Out before daybreak, in after dark. A troller had to get salmon while the getting was good. Able boats, iron men, devil take the hindmost. A run like that didn't come often and never lasted long.

So Bill had been sleeping soundly, relaxed as a cat on a cushion, his fair wavy hair a halo above a youthful, almost girlish face. He would have slept like that, dream or no dream, until the clang of the alarm clock brought him out of his bunk like an uncoiled spring.

But he was wide awake now and lying still.

Feet scuffed on deck. Another boat scraped, bumped against the *Iron Duke*. Rubber-tire fenders squeaked. He could hear the anchor line coming in, the thump when the hook landed on deck.

Bill Tollman lay inert, mind active. The *Iron Duke* was adrift. A current carried her noiselessly away from that fleet of sleeping trollers. No one would be awake to mark her going. The tide ran strong through that bight. The *Iron Duke* and the packet attached would go clear in the darkness, silently as a shadow. She *was* clear. Bill could feel the lift of the outside swell. The packet alongside bumped heavily in the roll.

"They'll rip the guard-rails off," Bill thought fretfully. But that gun at his head and the still, vague figure beside him made broken guard-rails not so important.

The man on top moved around, moved aft. The bumping ceased.

"He's let the other one go, or streamed her astern on a line," Bill thought. The *Iron Duke* rolled heavily now, broadside in the ocean swell, clear of Gander Island.

"GET up," the man beside him said crisply. "Start that percolator. No lights. I'll be right over you with this rod, baby."

The engine fired the first time Bill rolled the flywheel. Bill obeyed his orders without question. Whatever this was all about, he was on the spot. Gun and voice were equally mandatory.

"There's a guy with a rod on the back deck too," the man said. "Get up to your wheel. Turn on your binnacle light so you can see the compass. Steer due west. Try a fast one an' you go to feed the dogfish, quick like a fox."

Bill Tollman steered due west. A glance showed him another boat at the end of a tow-line. What this pair's game was Bill couldn't guess, for all the question marks in his mind. He didn't like it.

In that semi-luminous darkness he could see through the wheelhouse door another man squatting on the after hatch. Bill held his watch to the binnacle glow. One o'clock. Three hours to dawn. Heading into the open sea. Queer business. Bill was acutely conscious of the man standing by, standing where he could see the pale light on the compass needle. Offshore, into the wide Pacific.

A pair of feet dangled before one window. Bill glanced aft. A man beside him. A man squatting aft. A third man, sitting on top of the little pilothouse. Well, it didn't matter. It was all the same, one or a dozen.

"What's the big idea?" Bill Tollman asked at last.

"Ask me no questions an' I'll tell you no lies," the man beside him answered casually. "Steer west an' keep your trap shut."

Bill Tollman was only twenty-three. He had yellow hair and blue eyes, and a baby face. But he had been born on the Gulf of Georgia, and he was a seasoned salmon troller, as used to the open sea as to inside waters. He wondered if this trio realized that they had taken over a thirty-six foot boat and were pushing out where all hell was liable to break loose upon them. The first warnings of a gale were implicit in the sharpening of that ground swell. The wind was against

the swell. It came in little puffy gusts, now warm, now cold. Bill reached over and tapped the face of his barometer. The needle dipped. It stood at 29.20.

All that afternoon the glass had dropped steadily, from above thirty, to 29.80, to .70 to .60. A full inch drop in twelve hours. Coupled with other signs that almost certainly meant a wind of gale force. Whether it would be offshore or a blast from the Aleutians was anybody's guess.

That, Bill reflected, as he kept the west point on the lubber line, was as it happened. He simmered internally, wondering just what he could do if he boiled over. This was one of the things that didn't happen. Yet the thing that couldn't had occurred.

"This is good enough," the man on the stern called.

"Slow down and kick out your clutch," the man beside Bill instructed. "Sullivan, you help Terry."

The two men aft hauled short the tow-line till the other packet's nose was at the *Iron Duke's* stern. Under the brief illumination of a flashlight Bill Tollman recognized her as a troller that had been in the fleet three or four days. A haywire outfit, unfit for offshore, too shallow and top-heavy for anything but protected waters. There had been only one man aboard her, a fox-faced fellow about thirty. Apparently she had shipped a crew somewhere.

One man leaped aboard. The boats rolled, just clear of each other. On the towed vessel Bill Tollman heard a succession of thuds. Presently the man came out of the cabin and his fellow hauled short on the line so that he could jump back aboard the *Iron Duke*. He had a roll of charts in his hand, and when he lit on the *Iron Duke's* deck he brought the end of the tow-line with him.

The *Ace*, T.M. 907, went adrift, cast off, derelict, her poles swinging in a slow arc against the stars. The two men on the stern and the man beside Bill Tollman stared at her. In a minute or two the purpose of those muffled blows on wood became clear. An axe through wooden planking is an easy way to scuttle a ship. The *Ace* settled by the stern. Her bow lifted. A swell ran awash over her after deck. The bow rose a little higher, and presently she vanished and there was nothing on that dark swell but a few small swirls.

"*Spurlos versenkt,*" the man beside Bill said.

"What's that?" one of his fellows grumbled. "Spika da English, feller."

"Sunk without a trace," the man said. Then to Bill Tollman: "Get going. Head south-west."

THE three of them crowded into the small steering space. The first man went below. He was of medium height, spare-built. A thin-faced dark man giving the impression of a steel hardness not wholly physical. Bill Tollman classified him as a tough baby. Just how tough Bill had a feeling he was due to find out. He couldn't see the others clearly. Neither of them spoke.

The thin-faced man came up with Bill's .30 Winchester off its place on a bulkhead below. He broke the stock on the *Iron Duke's* rail and heaved the two pieces overboard.

"That's what'll happen to you, baby-face, if you make any false motions," he said to Bill. "Get down into the galley an' scramble us some breakfast."

Bill Tollman brooded over this while he fried bacon and eggs. That thin-faced man didn't need to break the rifle before he threw it overboard. Why did bad actors have to dramatize their acts?

Bill stripped at a hundred and thirty-five, and he had taken time off from salmon-fishing to strip down to trunks a good many times. He had boxed semi-finals in San Francisco and way points and leather-pushers get to know their way about. Bill had seen a lot of twenty-minute eggs and fought a few of them. He could go to town with both hands and he used his head for other things besides a hat-rack.

But there wasn't much that he could do with three armed men. What they might do to him was easy to imagine. The Terry person came down and sat watching him cook, watching out of ratty gray eyes in a red face with a pointed nose. Terry had fished the *Ace*. Bill Tollman judged that he was capable

of cutting a man's throat as calmly as he would dress a salmon. He only spoke to Bill once, and that was a snarl.

Bill called up into the wheelhouse when breakfast was ready. The dark man motioned him to the wheel.

"Bring your chow with you," he said.

Bill's motor rolled quietly. He could hear most of what they said. It wasn't enlightening. He ate and steered. The *Iron Duke* rolled, the small seas on her tail, meeting the ocean swell. The wind came from southeast. It was going to be dirty, that southeaster breeding a cross sea on top of the ground swell.

The three below sat sipping coffee. Under the glow of two small electric bulbs Bill could see all three clearly now. The third man was stocky, sandy-haired, just the common run of man. That was Sullivan. He and Terry addressed the thin-faced dark man, who turned out to be Dick Archer. They sucked at cigarettes in silence. Then the fox-faced man said in his snarly voice:

"Let's split it now."

Dick Archer looked at him for a moment. Bill Tollman looked down on them through the open door, wishing he had a gun.

"Oke," the thin-faced man said presently.

He reached behind him, under the blankets on Bill's bunk and brought out a black tin box with gilt lines around the edge and C. F. Co., in gilt letters in the middle of the lid.

Bill Tollman caught his breath. He didn't need any story with that picture. He knew the black tin box. Bill had been paid various sums out of that box in the last few days. That was a Crown Fish Company buyer on the scow in Gander Bay. That cash-box Bill knew, and most trollers in the fleet knew, contained anywhere between fifteen hundred and four thousand dollars. Bill could guess how these three came by it.

The thin-faced man began to lay out currency in three piles.

FROM over the *Iron Duke's* stern dawn lighted the mainland mountains, flooded the sea with gray, then yellow. A troubled sea. Clouds ran in wispy streaks above. Waveheads curled over in patches of foam. The *Iron Duke* rolled to her scuppers. A course sou'west kept her in a beam sea.

Bill Tollman steered for three hours without opening his mouth. They were running the show. He could stand that roll if they could. He held the *Iron Duke* in the trough and let her roll. She took a deep one finally. Water sloshed in through an open port.

Terry and Sullivan bounced out on the afterdeck. Terry snarled at Bill as he passed. The thin-faced dark man stopped beside Bill.

"Why don't you ease her to those big ones?" he asked.

"I'm steerin' the course you give me," Bill said.

"Obey orders if it busts owners, eh?" The man's lips smiled. But only his lips, curling up from his teeth. The rest of his face remained like a mask.

He stared at the barometer, at the wind-harried sea, back at the coast, now a faint purplish irregularity off the port beam.

"What you think of the weather?" he asked coolly.

"Goin' to be tough," Bill told him.

"This packet is supposed to be able to take it," the man said. "That's why we picked her."

"It wouldn't occur to you that my gas tanks might be low," Bill hazarded.

"Try another one, feller," Dick Archer grinned wickedly. "We lay across the fish-scow while you siphoned two drums of gas into your tanks last night, after you sold your fish."

He unrolled the charts Terry brought aboard and studied one, put his finger on a spot.

"We're about here."

"About there," Bill agreed.

"Ease her in this stuff," Dick Archer instructed. "The idea is, we stay well offshore all day. Toward night we run for Hope Island. Duck inside past the north end of Hope an' Nigei and head up Sound for Johnstone Strait. If we pass Hope around ten tonight we should make Johnstone Strait before daylight, eh?"

"Should," Bill nodded. "If you don't

allow for what this blow may do to us."

"What might it do to us?" the man inquired in a slightly skeptical tone.

"Blow us fifty or a hundred miles offshore," Bill said. "It's freshenin' all the time. If it blows the way it can blow, no boat this size can buck it."

"If she can't buck it she can ride it," Archer answered coolly. "That's up to you. You know her an' you're handlin' her. See you handle her right—or else."

HE stood by the wheel a few minutes, went out and talked to his partners, then below to stretch on Bill Tollman's bunk.

The wind stiffened. The seas rose. The *Iron Duke*, at half speed, wallowed along, making little headway. She was making more leeway west than she made good on her course. Bill opened up a notch.

He might get his throat cut inshore, but he did not want to be blown to sea in a living gale. Under the drive of those extra revs the *Iron Duke* began to jump. She plunged deep. Spray washed her. Now and then solid green topped her stemhead.

Both sea and wind were rising rapidly to the danger stage. The wind screamed now. A full gale. It flung spray against the wheelhouse windows with a rattle like fine shot. Great deep green pits began to open. Bill eased off his power. He had to, or drive her under.

Sullivan sat on his beam ends holding to the starboard gurdy. The fox-faced man, Terry, hunched in the lee of the wheelhouse, one arm about the mast.

The *Iron Duke* went off a big one, buried her bows deep in the next, curling up to break. The top came over her forward deck, slashed against the front of the wheelhouse.

A barrel or two sprayed right over and fell on the afterdeck, drenching the two men.

Dick Archer came up from below as his two partners scrambled into the wheelhouse off that streaming deck. Terry, his fox face distorted by anger, snarled at Bill Tollman:

"You did that 'a' purpose, you— By God, I'll get a kick outa knockin' you off, you baby-faced brat, when we git through with you. You—"

He had a choice selection of obscene epithets and he spat the foulest at Bill Tollman until Dick Archer cut in. Archer said to the fox-faced man: "Shut up, you windy fool. If there's any knockin' off done I'll do it. Get me?"

Sullivan and Terry went below. Eased off to dead slow, the *Iron Duke* soared up to the heavens and sank deep into green valleys. The seas came racing at her in high, white-tipped walls.

"Gettin' tough," Archer commented.

"The bottom don't fall outa the glass for nothin'," Bill Tollman answered through set teeth. "If you bimbos crave to stay afloat we got to heave-to an' ride this out, no matter how far offshore the wind drifts us."

"Hop to it," Archer nodded. "Navigatin' this packet is your business. I guess we mighta picked better weather for the job. That fool of a Terry said it wouldn't be nothin' but a summer wind."

Bill Tollman left the wheel to Archer. He hoisted and sheeted taut a small triangular sail. He got a sea-drag out of a locker—a cone-shaped affair of heavy canvas with cross-sticks in the mouth to hold it open. He put two gallons of oil in a tight canvas bag and bent that on the line to the drogue, punched two or three holes in the bag with a sail needle. With a fairly long line fast to the forward bitts the sea-anchor held her head up and the little sail aft helped. The leaking oil spread in a thin film, making a "slick" within which no wavehead broke white. Bill watched her ride for a few minutes. She rode easy. To a seaman it seemed easy. But the fox-faced man below began to curse Bill Tollman again for letting her pitch and roll.

"You squealin' rat," Dick Archer said, his tone a knife-edge in the silence, when Bill Tollman pulled the ignition switch and the engine stood quiet. "If you'd had the brains to estimate weather we wouldn't be standin' on our ear in this. You bellyachin'—"

He ripped out searing epithets in that cold, deadly tone, begging his partner,

it seemed to Bill, to show his teeth. Then he said to Bill, quite casually:

"All right, kid. You park on your stool an' watch the weather."

BILL sat on the stool. Under him the *Iron Duke* lifted and fell, rolled and twisted and dived. But she went fairly dry, making leeway in the general direction of Japan. The blue strip of mainland coast faded on the horizon. The wind at times came with hurricane force. It lashed the sea with unseen whips until the ocean writhed and heaved like a wounded animal. Above, the sun hid behind scudding battalions of cloud. Bill Tollman sat on his stool, bracing himself with a grip on the steering wheel, thinking.

Even if they missed him from Gander Bay, nobody would associate the *Iron Duke's* disappearance with murder and robbery. Bill inferred murder, from the fox-faced man's talk. The trolling crowd Bill flocked with would think he had gone out to fish. He had done that before in heavy weather. No one would worry about him for a day or so, even in a gale. They knew the *Iron Duke* could weather anything. In this blow nothing would be abroad offshore, not even a police patrol. They wouldn't think of combing the seas offshore. How would they know for whom to look? These three had done their job in the dark, with all the fleet asleep. Their tracks were covered.

They would still cover their tracks. They couldn't afford to let him go loose. They would knock him off and sink him along with the *Iron Duke* and go on to other raids, as soon as they made land again, under cover of darkness.

Bill's gaze traveled about the small pilothouse as the *Duke* reeled and staggered. Compass in its binnacle. Charts on a board. A butcher knife in the galley and a small axe behind the galley stove. As well be in a den of lions barehanded.

The thin-faced man sat on the floor, where the motion was least. They were silent, down there, for a long time. Eventually the hum of voices rose, grew strident, punctuated with oaths. The fox-faced man was cursing the boat, his companions, the sea, with semi-hysterical fervor. He shouted at last:

"We gotta move. We gotta git in outa this. It's crazy to lie out here. She'll take one of them big ones an' swamp. We gotta get in to shelter. You hear me?"

"Hear you?" Dick Archer said contemptuously. "Hell, you're a noise like a drum—all boom an' no tune. Pipe down, Terry!"

Bill Tollman was looking down through the companionway, hopeful these wolves would quarrel and start tearing each other's throats. The fox-faced man glared up at him. His eyes were glassy.

"You—" he yelled. "Git back in your box!"

"You—" Bill Tollman's tongue got away from him in a quick surge of anger. "You *are* just a noise."

Terry got to his feet, lurched toward the steps. His pointed face was a fury. He whipped a knife out of a sheath on his belt.

Bill Tollman kicked the knife out of his hand when his head and shoulders came through the companionway. He kicked Terry in the face, knocking him backward as the knife clanged on the stove and fell to the floor. Dick Archer picked it up, laughed, balancing the knife in his hand. Sullivan grinned like a wolf. Terry hung at the foot of the steps, screaming curses at Bill Tollman. Curiously, he didn't go for the gun he presumably had in his pocket. Bill wondered why.

Dick Archer got to his feet. He still had Terry's knife in his hand.

"You slobberin' ape," he said, "get out on deck an' cool off."

"I'll cut this bozo's heart out," Terry panted.

"Spik it," Archer said in a cold, impersonal tone. "You're the kinda guy would take a sledge-hammer to an engine if it didn't run to suit you. Leave the kid alone. Damn you, he's more use to us right now than you are. Up you go, Terry. Let the wind blow on you an' cool your fevered blood. Up!"

He emphasized his order with the point of the knife held out like a spear.

The fox-faced man's ratty eyes dilated. His mouth opened and closed, but no sound came forth.

He came up the steps. He didn't even look at Bill Tollman. His eyes were on Dick Archer until he reached the wheelhouse door. Then they turned on the wild run of the sea.

In that moment Archer came up the steps like a cat. He drove the knife, Terry's knife, in under one shoulder-blade. Drew back and stabbed Terry again in the breast. Held him by one arm as he sagged to the deck so that the roll wouldn't pitch the body overboard. His dark face wore that lip smile. He wiped the blade on Terry's flannel shirt. Sullivan came up from below, his round reddish face as wooden as Archer's thin dark features.

"Well," he drawled. "The punk *did* crab too much."

"And, incidentally," Dick Archer replied calmly, "six grand is not so much, split three ways."

BILL TOLLMAN watched them take the money off the dead man, his gun, a pouch of tobacco. Watched Dick Archer cut two ten-pound leads out of a trolling line and lash them about Terry's ankles. Without ceremony they heaved the body overside. As the sea closed over the corpse Dick Archer said mockingly:

"Oh, bury me in the ocean deep,
With a round shot at my head and feet."

Sullivan swabbed up the blood and threw the stained cloth overboard. Bill looked on from his seat on the stool. Not exactly horrified, just chilled. He had never seen a man killed and put away in that cool, impersonal manner, as if it were a matter of simple routine.

Archer and Sullivan stood in the pilothouse, staring over the bow at the green hummocks that rocked the *Iron Duke*.

"You might even think," Sullivan said after a long interval, "that no split at all would be better."

The thin-faced man grinned.

"Don't be a sap," he said. "I couldn't take in Yokohama and Freshwater Bay alone. You can't pull this stuff single-handed. You know the ropes, Sullivan. An' you don't chatter like a monkey. You're a safe pal."

"I can protect myself, anyhow," Sullivan said coolly. "You'll never get the jump on *me*, Dick."

"I wouldn't be sucker enough to try," Archer assured him.

He glanced at Bill Tollman.

"You're a fairly cool hand for a kid," said he. "You're in pretty fast company. We've cleaned up two fish buyers. We aim to pick off a couple more cash boxes an' go south for the winter. How'd you like to get in on the play?"

"Like Terry," Bill Tollman answered. "He was in on it, an' look at him now."

"He was just bait," Dick Archer said carelessly. "He talked himself to death."

Bill didn't say anything to that.

"We're ridin' this pretty good," Sullivan commented. "Terry knew an able boat. He used good judgment pickin' this one, even if he was a pain in the neck himself."

They didn't pursue that subject. It was just a bluff anyway, Bill thought. They didn't need him once they got inshore. He was just bait, too. Once in Johnstone Strait all they needed was the *Iron Duke's* dinghy, to sneak by dark into the two fish camps they mentioned. Bill knew that ground. No, the thin-faced dark man would play it safe.

It wasn't pleasant to think about. Not with that bloodstain drying dark on the deck planks. Bill stared at the heaving sea. No rest or mercy for a tired man anywhere. He *was* tired. Two hours sleep last night. Three the night before. He was drowsing with his head on folded arms when Archer came up from below again.

"Long time between eats," said he. "This oil burner of yours safe in a slop? Hot coffee would be okay."

"Safe enough," Bill said.

"Light her up, then. Sullivan can take a whack at cookin'," Archer declared.

Bill got the burner going in the galley stove. He left the flame low in case of a violent surge. He went back up to the wheelhouse. He had a distaste for

being alone in that cabin with those two.

Within five minutes a cry of alarm brought Bill with a leap to the companionway. Flame leaped from the top of the stove to the deck carlins. Bill Tollman automatically reached behind him for the fire extinguisher, jumped down into the cabin. He wasn't even startled. He had blasted out bigger fires with that red cylinder. When he reached the stove he tripped the snap valve that cut off the oil flow. He pointed the black cone nozzle and moved a little lever. There was a sharp hiss and the flame died like a snuffed candle.

"Funny," he said, "that she'd flare up like that."

"This bright bozo," Archer drawled sarcastically, "thinks he's an expert at anything. Wasn't satisfied to leave it the way it was. He wanted more heat, quick."

"Boy, oh boy!" Sullivan breathed. He wiped sweat off his forehead. "A boat on fire in a sea like this. Burn or drown. Believe you me, I don't monkey with that thing no more."

"Not if *I* see you," Archer said.

"It's all right," Bill told them patiently, "if you leave it the way I set it. I'd like some coffee myself."

He cleaned out the surplus oil, got the blue flame going again under the kettle. The thin-faced man glanced at Bill's extinguisher.

"Damn handy piece of equipment, that," he remarked amiably.

Bill climbed back into the wheelhouse, put the red extinguisher in its bracket on the wall. He sat staring at its bright red length, the black cone-nozzle, brass-trimmed. Yes, a high-pressure extinguisher was handy in such emergencies. Absently Bill's eyes rested on the instructions for use engraved on a brass plate. He perched there on his stool while the smell of coffee wafted up from below.

Afternoon waned. The sinking sun made a sickly glow in the west. Twilight became darkness, a darkness like the tomb but not as silent. It was filled with the complaining, sometimes menacing, voice of the wind in wire stays, on mast and slender trolling-poles. In that dark disturbance of air and sea the *Iron Duke* tossed and rolled. A man could not move without losing his balance unless he held fast to something with one hand.

Bill refilled the oil bag while he could see. About ten o'clock he got a blanket and pillow off his bunk.

"She's a rampin', roarin' night an' there's nothin' I can do about it," he said to the two men below. "She'll ride or she'll founder. I got to sleep."

He lay down on the wheelhouse floor athwartships. He didn't really sleep. Only in cat naps, filled with ghastly dreams.

When he lay in a half doze he could hear voices in that lighted cabin. Sullivan sat on the floor. Archer stretched in the bunk. The *Iron Duke* would go down on her beam ends now and then. Sometimes it seemed as if she would never right herself. Bill was used to that. He had laid many a night on offshore banks, rolling and pitching, just so that he could run his trolling lines at the crack of dawn. But never in anything as bad as this.

He didn't know whether the two below stayed awake from weather nervousness, or to watch each other, and he didn't care. Bill believed that when they got inshore he would be another man overboard. But while they lay off here he was safe. They needed him. So he slept when he could, which wasn't much nor often.

HE came out of a brief sleep near morning, aware of a different motion to his little ship. For a moment he couldn't understand the complete stillness. Then he realized that there was no roar of wind in his ears. He sat up and looked out. Enormous smooth-topped seas ran under the *Iron Duke*. There was a thin streak of light in the east.

When Bill stirred the others came up, joined him on the back deck.

"Wind's gone," Archer said. "Let's eat an' head back for the coast. How far d'you reckon we got blown offshore?"

"In twenty-four hours? I wouldn't know." Bill shook his head. "No bear-

ings. Maybe thirty miles. Maybe seventy."

The sun thrust yellow shafts through breaking clouds. Bill Tollman got in his sea-drag and started his engine. On a clear day a man could see the coast a long way. But the *Iron Duke* moved in the center of a great gray-green circle, ringed by a landless horizon.

"The drift was nor'west. You'll steer sou'east till you get a bearing, eh?" Archer asked.

Bill nodded. He was fresh, rested, his eyes clear. The other two were drawn-faced. They had sat awake all night burning their throats with cigarettes. In the morning sun they blinked out of bloodshot eyes looking east for the solid blue of land against the tenuous blue of the sky.

When he was well under way Bill glanced below. Sullivan stretched on the floor, wrapped in a blanket. Archer lay on the bunk. His black eyes were open. He looked at Bill's face in the doorway, and got off the bunk, came up in the wheelhouse.

"How often do you have to come below to oil up this mill?"

"She oils herself automatic," Bill told him.

"Then you don't have to get in that cabin at all to keep going?"

Bill shook his head. "Not unless she stopped."

"Okay. See you stay out," Archer said softly. "Sullivan's dead to the world. I just about got to have some shut-eye myself. I'm goin' to make this door an' the skylight fast from inside. I'm goin' to set the alarm to wake us in three hours. Don't try gettin' at us while we sleep, unless you want a slug through your middle. I sleep light an' I wake easy, an' I wake shootin' if I need to."

"I don't crave to commit suicide," Bill Tollman said. "If you got to be woke I'll holler like hell outside."

"And if any boat *should* bear down on us," Archer went on, in that low, tense way he had of speaking, "you'll holler as soon as she comes in sight. If she comes up close to speak to you, you're alone, see? Been blown offshore, fishin'. You pass a hint of anything wrong an' I knock you off if it's my last act. *Sabe* the play?"

Bill nodded.

The door closed. Presently there were scuffing sounds and some hammering against the door jamb above the steps. Bill saw the skylight, which he had opened, close down to a crack too narrow for a man to get his hand through to the inside fastenings. The man with the thin, dark face was locking himself in and Bill Tollman out. Bill shrugged his shoulders again.

He sat on his stool and steered. An hour, two hours, three. He heard the alarm clock jingle. It rang and rang. It was hard to tell whether it ran down or a hand shut it off. A tired man sleeps soundly. Bill Tollman didn't move off his stool.

The *Iron Duke* marched steadily at eight knots across great uneasy valleys, over high green shifting ridges. The steady beating of the mechanical heart that turned the screw almost lulled him to sleep. Now and then he would step out on the back deck. Mostly he stared straight ahead. Looking for a landfall. A landfall which might not be so good. Bill Tollman brooded on his stool. Does a butcher think anything of cutting a sheep's throat to supply someone with roast lamb? Could a dead man describe thieves and murderers?

A LITTLE past noon a deep solid-blue outline stood over the *Iron Duke's* bow, where a minute before there had been nothing but empty sky.

"Land ho!" Bill Tollman croaked. His lips and throat were dry. Water everywhere, but none to drink. He had not wet his lips for seven hours. No dinking water outside that locked cabin.

Bill tapped on the door. He listened, head cocked on one side, while the *Iron Duke* swept over three swells. He called. He lifted his voice to a shout. He tried the door. It was solid from inside. He climbed out on top of the cabin, knelt, peering through the skylight after he wiped the crusted salt from the glass. He could see dimly a foot sticking out of his bunk. A huddle on the floor wrapped in a twisted blanket.

Bill stared a long time through that skylight.

"That," he muttered at last, "seems to be that. You would go to sleep in a heremetically sealed cabin."

THE *Iron Duke* lurched in over Nawhitti Bar at sundown under a cloudless sky. Bill Tollman stared over his bow out of tired eyes. As he rounded a point that gave on the gut leading to Bull Harbor, a gray forty-footer flying the blue ensign came surging down Goletas Channel.

He whistled her down when she drew near. Bill knew the P.M.L. 9 and her crew of two. The skipper in provincial police uniform leaned out his wheelhouse window as the two boats came abeam, almost gunnel to gunnel.

"You were reported missing this morning," the constable grinned. "Get blown offshore?"

"I'll say."

"Troller called *Ace* missing too. See anything of her?"

"I can give you plenty details about that," Bill said. He stared a minute, silent. "You fellows hear anythin' about the fish buyer at Gander Bay gettin' stuck up for his cash?"

"The fish buyer at Gander Bay was slugged to death and his money taken," the skipper of the police launch said. "The night before that a camp at Copper Cove was robbed by two masked men. How do you know about that when you were blown to sea? We just got word last night."

"You better come aboard," Bill said quietly. "I got what you might call exhibits A an' B down in my cabin—which I been locked out of since sunrise this mornin'."

A coroner's jury brought in a verdict at Alert Bay, after an autopsy and hearing Bill's evidence.

"Death by carbon monoxide poisoning, due to fumes from the exhaust of a gas engine in a closed cabin."

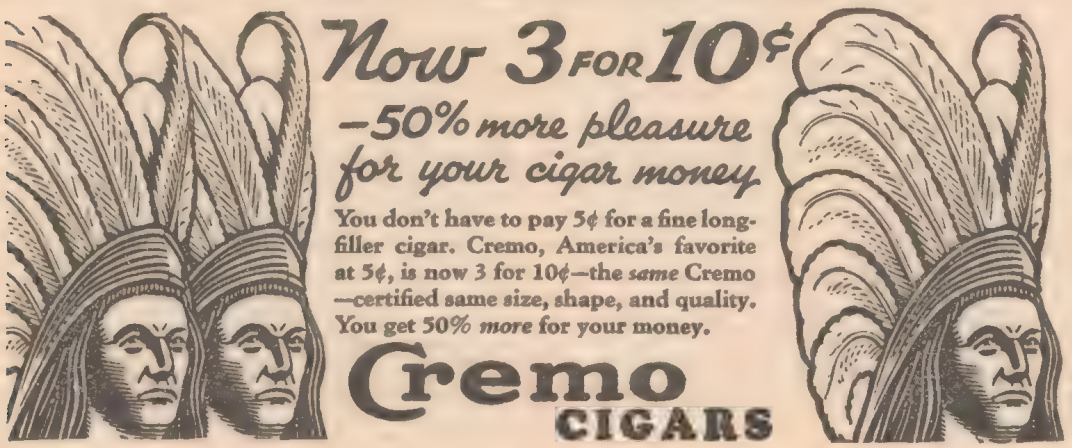
Bill Tollman walked from the inquest down to where the *Iron Duke* lay berthed at a float. He sat on his steering stool and stared at that red fire extinguisher.

Bill Tollman had answered truthfully every question the coroner put to him. But he hadn't volunteered information he wasn't asked for. And he didn't see any reason why he should set a qualified medical man and six jurors right on a technicality.

Because there were no leaks in Bill's exhaust line. Archer and Sullivan didn't die from inhaling carbon monoxide. The gas that killed them was carbon dioxide. That is the chemical a hand fire extinguisher is loaded with.

Bill continued to stare at that bright red cylinder with the black cone-muzzle. He hadn't thought it necessary to tell the coroner's jury that slight opening in the skylight had been wide enough for him to get that nozzle through.

Bill was aware of the legal axiom that a man must not take the law into his own hands. He wondered just how much a couple of highly potential killers would have been influenced by abstract principles of jurisprudence, when they decided to knock *him* off.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THE DEVIL AND PADDY DROGHEDA

A Novelette

By WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

THE thing come about, so the story goes, back in the good old days when Ireland was a new an' brawlin' land. The colleens all had a merry eye to 'em an' the men was an umbrageous bunch of Micks who relished a mug of ale but liked a good fight better.

It seems that it happens thus.

There is a red-headed Mick who is comin' home along the shore one night when he meets up with the devil. It is close onto dark an' the Ould Wan is sittin' mournful on a rock while he tries to catch fishes for the supper of him. This Mick watches interested for a minute an' then he says:

"A good evenin' to ye, brother. 'Tis me observation that it is small luck that ye are havin' with your fishin' this night."

"Aye," the Ould Wan agrees with him in a sad voice. "A good two hours have I set here an' never a nibble. 'Tis like to be empty that the stomach of me will be come mornin' time."

Now this Mick has been lookin' the Ould Wan over an' he sees that he's a pleasant enough spoken gentleman, for all that he has two horns an' wears a tail with a spike on it. There is a saucy cut to his jib an' a twinkle to his eye which reminds this Mick that it is a lonesome supper of his own that he is goin' to. So, he bein' a man who is over fond of company, he says:

"In me house, which is just over the hill, there is a mess of taties an' a jug of as good a whiskey as ye are ever like to cast a lip over. So do ye rise upon the hind legs of ye an' come along. The two

"Right here, Datto Bacolod. Ye have wished to see me?"

of us will make a rare fine night of it."

"With pleasure," the Ould Wan says. "If there is one thing that I have a great weakness for it is taties an' good whiskey. Will ye lead the way, friend?"

So the devil picks up his tail an' hooks it over his arm an' he an' the Mick go up over the hill an' down into a hollow to where the Mick's sod house sets at the edge of Killvain Bog. They go in an' the Mick sets two pannikins an' a stone jug on the table.

"First we will have a small nip to drive out the dampness, which is bad hereabouts," he says, pourin' whiskey into the pannikins, "an' then I will be stirrin' up the fire an' the taties will be ready before ye could shout 'Ould Nick' twice."

"Eh?" the devil asks.

"A slip of the tongue," this Mick tells him. "Do ye think nothin' of it. Well, here's to the horns on the head of ye—may they never come loose."

"A pretty sentiment," the Ould Wan tells him, pleased. "May ye marry a woman without a tongue."

So they drink, but the damp of the night is heavy upon them, and they drink again so as to confound any chill which might creep up unawares. It is after the fifth one that the Mick gets up an' goes to stir the fire.

"The taties?" he suggests, cockin' an eye at the devil, who is stuffin' tobacco into a clay hod an' enjoyin' himself.

"The devil with the taties!" the Ould Wan says, an' he rolls back in his chair laughin' until he near chokes at his own wit. "Do ye poke up the fire an' sit down again instead while we have another wee one. 'Tis not often that I meet up with a man of your discernment, an' we will talk of this an' that."

WELL, to make a long story short, the two of 'em let the taties go while they sit there an' pass the jug back an' forth to keep away the damp. It was a great country for damp around Killvain Bog. The Mick listens to the yarns which the Ould Wan spins, an' a great tale he

could tell, too, of the places he had been an' the people he had known. It was close onto midnight when the jug runs dry an' he stands up.

"A grand evenin' it has been," he says lookin' regretful at the jug. "Howsoever, I reckon that it is best that I be on me way an' I'll bid ye a good evenin'."

"Easy," this Mick tells him. "The night has just begun an' there is yet fun to be had. It is a great fellow that ye are from your own account—still, I am not so bad meself. Would ye care to wrestle now?"

The Ould Wan grins an' there is a real pleasure in the eyes of him as this Mick can see.

"Wrestle?" he asks. "I have heard ye right?"

"Aye," says the Mick, "an' 'tis only fair to warn ye that ye are lookin' at the champion catch-as-catch-caner of County Tipperary."

"Fine," the devil tells him, "for I perceive ye to be a man after me own heart. Me own record is not to be laughed at, friend. In all me experience there is but one decision that I have lost so far as me memory serves me at the moment."

"Indeed?" the Mick asks polite.

" 'Twas a feller that I met up with when I was travelin' down south in the valley of the Jordan River some years ago. Three straight falls he took from me to win as handy a little match as ye are like to come across between here an' there. A big laughin' man with a black beard to him, he was. A fair match, though, an' he won hands down."

"It is an interesting tale," the Mick says. "Seein' then as we are both men of reputation, we will wrestle for the championship of the south of all Ireland. Catch-as-catch-can an' three falls to a decision. Are ye agreed?"

"Wait," the Ould Wan says an' he grins wicked while his ears are pointed in the firelight. " 'Tis a side bet that we should be havin' on this match. Am I right?"

"Aye," the Mick tells him. "What will it be?"

"If ye should win I will make ye the richest man between Macgillycuddys Reeks an' Dundalk Bay. If ye should lose ye will become my man—ye an' the clan that comes after ye father and son."

"A fair bet," says this Mick. "Do ye be upon the guard of ye, friend."

Well, it was a grand match. The devil took the first fall with a flyin' mare in an hour an' seven minutes, twenty-one seconds, but this Mick come back to make it a fall apiece at the end of an even three hours of wrestlin'. They rested for a bit an' then the devil says:

"Are ye ready, friend?"

"Aye," the Mick tells him an' they go to it again.

This Mick was a great wrestler, but as the sun begins to come up over Killvain Bog, he knows that he has met his match. The whiskey is dyin' out in him an' he is beginnin' to tire. The Ould Wan gets a hammerlock on him finally an' then it is all over an' this Mick gets up, dustin' himself off an' shakin his head.

"A fair match," he says, "an' though I have lost it, it has been a pleasure to wrestle with an expert like yourself."

The devil is feeling of his nose where it has been rubbed some in the dirt an' is grinnin' that pointed grin of his in the sunrise. He picks up his tail an' loops it over his arm preparatory to leavin'.

"Ye will not be forgettin' the side bet that we made, friend?" he asks. "Ye are now my man—ye an' the clan that comes after ye."

"I will not be forgettin' it," this Mick says, sober all at once.

The Ould Wan grins again. "I have told ye that there was only one who has taken three straight falls from me. Howsoever, I have sat at your fire an' I have drunk your whiskey an' I have found ye to be a man much to me likin'. Therefore I will put me mark upon ye but lightly an' will leave ye free to wander until I send for ye. Likewise shall I put me mark on the clan that shall come after ye—but this I shall do for them. They shall wrestle with me on the terms which I have made ye here this night an', should they win, the debt will be fairly paid. I shall now bid ye a good mornin', friend."

So the Ould Wan bows an' walks on up an' over the hill with his tail across his arm an' a jaunty set to his bow legs.

Well, the tale is an old one, an' you

have likely heard it before. True or not I could not say. Still, there was Paddy Drogheda—black Irish, an' a man whose like I have not seen before or since.

IT WAS down in Mindanao that I run into Paddy Drogheda first. I was a green recruit in them days, startin' my first hitch in a cavalry outfit which was inflictin' law an' order upon the little brown brothers down in Mindanao.

My introduction to Paddy Drogheda was sudden.

The regimint, which I have just joined, is at Zamboango outfittin' for a fresh expedition back into the hills; an' it so happens that on this day, me bein' off duty for the matter of an hour or so, I ask the first sergint for a pass to go out an' see the city.

"A pass, is it?" he says. "An' what is it that ye would be doin' with a pass—ye bein' a recruit with little experience an' no sense whatever? 'Tis on the picket line that a recruit belongs, not out on pass."

Well, bein' a first sergint for a considerable number of years now meself I can understand well that he spoke the truth. Howsoever, I was different then, so I answers up to him with dignity.

"It is eight thousand miles that I have come, Sergint, to fight for me country against the heathen. It is me right now that I have a pass to rest me a bit from the rigors of soldierin'."

"Presently ye will learn that a recruit has no rights at all," he tells me, sour. "Howsoever, if I do not give ye a pass ye will write a letter to your congressman an'—the army no longer bein' what it used to be—I will be troubled with correspondence at a time when I should be workin' on me strength returns. Here's your pass, an' do ye get out of my sight."

So it is that I am walkin' down the road at about two o'clock in the afternoon gogglin' at the bazaars an' the carabao carts an' sundry similar sights—the same bein' considerable different from what I have been used to back in Walla Walla, Washington. I am amused considerable by the sight of the little brown men in their tight pants an' I regard them with a mild brand of contemptuousness which is born partly of me new uniform an' partly of the general ignorance which is peculiar to recruits, quarter-master sergints an' major generals of the line.

" 'Tis a silly conceit," I am thinkin' to meself, "that wee men such as these should expect to commit successful riot an' insurrection against the likes of us."

It is a prideful thought, an' I puff out the chest of me an' gaze upon 'em haughty as I stride along. Already I can feel a general's stars upon the shoulders of me uniform, an' it is not for some seconds that I observe that something unusual is happenin' around me.

I have come into a square sort of market place an' all of a sudden it comes to me mind that the behavior of the populace is somewhat on the queer side. They are goin' to cover like rabbits into a brier patch, the while they are screechin' scandalous.

"*Juramentado! Juramentado!*"

I have not heard the word before—although later I will come to understand it well—an' I stand there like a silly gawk, wonderin' if it is the sight of an American soldier that has put them to carryin' on so. I am not kept long in doubt.

A voice says, close behind me: "Run, you thus-an'-so recruit! Run if you don't want to figure prominent on tomorrow morning's casualty list!"

Well, I spun about for about a half a second then an' I saw something which impressed me vivid. Fifty feet away there is a little brown man—though little ain't the way he looked to me then. He was maybe five feet tall, but he looked like the Cardiff giant, an' it took no seventh son of a seventh son to guess that he had come to town for no good. His eyes is lit up unholy, he is travelin' at a sort of a boundin' run, an' over his head he is swingin' the wickedest lookin' two edged *kris* that I have ever looked upon.

"*Allah Akbar!*" he says, or words to that effect, while I stand there frozen.

There is a fat Chino sprintin' desperate in front of the Moro, but it is easy to see that he has not got a chance. The Moro bounds up in the air an' that *kris*

sings nasty as he swings it out pretty.

"Allah Akbar!" he sings out again, and the Chino's head skips across the dust like you would skip a flat stone across a mill pond.

Well, it looks as though I am next, an' not even goin' to have time to be regretful about the contemptuous thoughts I had entertained about these little brown men. Then a gun bangs loud an' clear close to my elbow.

Me perceptions are considerably confused, but I see that it is a soldier. He is walkin' forward cool an' easy an' firin' from a little above the hip—firin' deliberate an' still so fast that it seems as though the six explosions is all one. I can see the Moro's body jerk as the bullets hit him, but he keeps comin' on, an' I can feel the hair beginnin' to rise at the back of the neck of me.

I am thinking: " 'Tis bad news that me old father back in Walla Walla will have this day," when the Moro goes slack sudden an' spills down slack in the dust not ten feet away from where I am standin'.

Close to forty years ago, it was, yet I can still remember vivid how the sun ran along the wavy blade of that big knife an' the wicked grin that the little brown man's face had set into.

Well, I turn slow then an' I see that the man who has killed him is Sergint Paddy Drogheda. Paddy Drogheda is a big man, handsome an' with a beautiful square cut to his shoulders an' the reckless look of the black Irish on him. It is not that that I am seein', though. It is the look on the face of the man, for he is leanin' forward a little to stare down at the dead man in the sun, an' if ever I have seen the devil look out of a human's eyes, I saw it that day there in Zamboango.

"It was a good game that ye played, brother," I hear Paddy Drogheda say soft, "but ye picked a tougher man than yourself for a pardner."

He straightens, then, an' begins to punch the empties out of the cylinder of his revolver. I can see that his hands are steady as a well trained troop horse. I see, too, that he has put six bullets into the chest of the dead Moro in the space that you could cover with the palm of the hand of ye. I am sick all of a sudden.

PEOPLE are beginnin' to come out of the shops again as Paddy Drogheda turns to me. His eyes are a sort of light green as he looks; he drops the gun back into its scabbard an' puts his fists on the hips of him.

"Recruit," he says soft, "which troop would be havin' the misfortune to carry ye upon its rolls?"

"Troop B," I tell him, shaky, for the scare of the thing has not yet gone out of me.

"So," he says, "an' where is your sidearm?"

"In me tent," I answer. "It was not thinkin' that I was that I would have use for it in the city, an' so I left it behind. 'Tis a heavy thing to carry about—"

Well, he stands there in the sun for five minutes an' curses me in a way that I have not been cursed before or since. It is a soft an' drawlin' voice that he has, but when he is done I know well that I would rather face two Moros, such as the one that lies dead there in the dust, than to face Paddy Drogheda when the anger is upon him.

"It was heavy," he concludes, "so ye left it in your tent! Arragh! The babes that they send us with which to fight a war! Now, Recruit, do ye go over an' take a good look at yonder Chino, who has lost his silly head, so that ye may take a lesson from this day that ye will not forget."

As I have told ye, the thing has stayed with me for close to forty years.

Afterward he took me down the road a spell to where there was a place where beer could be had, an' he sat me down at a little table, for he could see that I was cruel shaken. He bought beers for the two of us an' lifted his glass.

"Recruit," he says, "ye will not forget what I have said to ye this day, for it may be the means of savin' the life of ye upon some other day. Howsoever, now it is a thing of the past an' we will not refer to it again. Do ye understand?"

"Aye," I tells him. " 'Tis understandin' that I am."

It was no lie. I have since lived to be

"Ye picked a better man than yeself, brother!"

grateful times over for the things that Paddy Drogheda told me on that an' subsequint afternoons while we lay there in camp at Zamboango.

The little brown brothers was quiet up in the hills for the time bein', an' the commandin' general, bein' a man of sense, knew that the regimint would take no hurt from a month's rest while the horses fatted up for the next campaign.

So we do troop drill in the mornings an' loafed in the afternoons durin' the double fortnight that followed. Then it was that I got to know Paddy Drogheda well.

It was not a common thing that a senior duty sergint should have much truck with a seventeen-year-old recruit picked green right off the tree, but it may be that Paddy Drogheda had a sort of proprietary interest in me, since he was the cause of me still wearin' a head on the top of the collar of me shirt. On my part it was stark, naked hero worship an' nothin' different, an' I cannot find it in me to be ashamed of it to this day, though it was to get me into various an' sundry brands of trouble.

HE TELLS me many things, does Paddy Drogheda over the beer glasses down in old Woo Fee's cafe on Maglili Road. Since I was young, with no sense at all, he was careful that I did not drink too much, although of himself he was not so careful. Strong drink was one of the wild horses that he rode, though there were others as well.

" 'Tis a grand thing that beer is," he tells me one evenin' when the two of us are down at Woo Fee's cafe, "an' a mug or two of it will bring ye to no harm. Rather, it brights your eye an' imparts to ye social graces that would be entirely lackin' otherwise. Howsoever, there is the devil himself lurkin' in the foam a-top of the third mug, an' ye will have no traffic with such. That is an order, Recruit O'Hare."

Sayin' which he orders another schooner—for himself alone—the same bein' his sixth by my count that evenin'.

" 'Tis me observation that ye do not follow yourself the rules which ye lay down for others, Sargint," I tell him, the two beers which I have had doin' little more than aggravatin' my thirst. "I am a

man grown now with hair upon me face, an' seein' as the spirit moves me so, I will have another beer. Waiter!"

"Steady," Paddy Drogheda says soft. "Ye are nothin' but a great lump of a farmer boy, an' I will not allow ye to make a greater fool of yourself than ye naturally are anyway."

One of Woo Fee's waiters has come paddin' up, but Sergint Drogheda jerks a thumb at him an' tells him: "Scat!" in a tone which scats him in a hurry.

Well, bein' in truth what Paddy Drogheda calls me—a fool plow boy which has not yet learned to wipe his own nose—I am filled sudden with umbrage at the way he has treated me. Am I not a full fledged cavalryman now, an' but waitin' for the word to go out an' break a lance or two with the best of the little brown bolomen who swarmed over the hills? I think that it was me pride that was hurt the most, though—the shame that Paddy Drogheda should treat me as a pulin' baby not yet dry behind the ears.

So I stand up an' I say dignified: "Sergint, I have much to thank ye for the assumption, which ye have assumed of late, that I have not the wit to regulate me personal affairs. I will therefore bid ye a good night, an' henceforth will conduct meself in such a manner as I damn well please!"

"Sit down, Recruit O'Hare!"

Paddy Drogheda has not moved. He is sittin' there quiet with his arms on the table, but I see, sudden, that that green light has come into his eyes—the same which I had seen first on that afternoon when he had stood there in the sunlight lookin' down at the Moro which he had killed. It is a thing which I cannot describe, but all at once my knees are weak an' I can feel a cold thread runnin' up the spine of me.

"Sit down, Recruit O'Hare," he says again, an' I set.

He is quiet for a long time, but finally he leans back in his chair an' begins to fold a brown paper cigarette. When he speaks the lazy drawl has come back into his voice again.

" 'Tis no one but a wise man indeed who knows what is good for him at the time he is doin' it," he says. "Furthermore, it is me observation that wise men are few an' far between among recruits. Therefore I shall tell ye a story, Recruit O'Hare. It may be that ye can find a moral in it."

HE BLOWS smoke through his lips an' gazes thoughtful at the gray spiral of it. At his sign a waiter—the same one who had been at the table a moment before, bad luck to 'im—brings a fresh mug of beer. Paddy Drogheda tastes it an' puts it down.

"This was a young feller that I knew some years ago," he says. "Maybe a little older than you, Recruit O'Hare—say about nineteen. A good boy at heart, but wild an' headstrong an' with a temper like the devil's own. There was them that tried to warn him but he would pay them no heed.

"Father Mulcahey was one of them. 'Terence,' he says unhappy, 'I have word that again last night ye were drunk an' brawlin' with Jack Lait an' the bunch of scoundrels which he keeps about him down at the Tavern. Can ye not see, boy, that nothin' but trouble lies that way?'

" 'A fondness for trouble I have, Father,' this Terence tells him impudent, 'an' it is lookin' after meself that I will be without help from you.'

" 'It is a devil that ye have in ye, boy, an' ye are breakin' the hearts of your parents by the wild ways of ye—to say nothing of Molly O'Dean. Will ye not stop now before it is too late?'

" 'It is settlin' down that I'll be after I have had my fun an' not before, Father Mulcahey,' this Terence tells him. 'It is little harm that I'll be takin' from a bit of drink now an' then an' a friendly fight once in a while.'

"The old man shakes his head slow. 'Marry Molly,' he says, 'an' settle down now—black trouble lies ahead if ye keep followin' the trail to which ye have now set the feet of ye.'

" 'I will be marryin' Molly O'Dean all in good time, Father Mulcahey.'

" 'Ah, will ye now? Molly O'Dean is not the girl to put up forever with a wild young scamp who cares for nothin' but drink an' hellin' about with wicked men such as John Lait—may a curse be upon his breed an' all like it! Martin Fenn

has been urgin' his suit on Molly O'Dean for this year gone past.'

" 'An' who is Martin Fenn?' this Terence asks Father Mulcahey, contemptuous. 'A stick-in-the-mud with no red blood in the body of him at all!'

" 'He is a sober an' an upright man,' the good father says severe, 'an' I am thinkin' that it will be a fortunate thing for Molly if it is Martin Fenn who is standin' at her side when I pronounce me blessing over the two of them. The devil has laid his mark onto ye, Terence, an' it would be an unhappy thing to see that mark touch Molly O'Dean.'

" 'Will ye stop talkin' in riddles, Father?' this Terence says angry. 'I have told ye that Molly will wait for me—but if she should not I will break Martin Fenn in the two hands of me before he will marry her!'

" 'It is a long an' cruel road to which ye have set your feet, Terence,' the good man tells him, a little sad. 'Presently there will be no turnin' back.'

"It was clear warnin', do ye see? But then there is none so blind as them that will not look."

Paddy Drogheda drains his glass an' begins to roll another brown paper cigarette between his fingers. The waiter brings up a fresh beer an' Paddy runs his fingers around the bulge of the mug to feel of the cool of it. I find, sudden, that me taste for beer is gone.

Paddy Drogheda goes on then, his voice still drawlin' an' soft but with an undercurrent of regret in it. "Well, it was maybe a week later an' there was a dance out in the country at a little place called Andersonville. Terence is there, along with Jack Lait an' the rest of his bully boys. The lot of them are carryin' a heavy cargo of bad whiskey an' are enjoyin' themselves considerable with some of the local girls—the same bein' no better than the Lord intended 'em to be. It is then that Molly O'Dean comes in with her mother an' Martin Fenn.

"They pass close to where this Terence is dancin' with a little hussy by the name of Rachel Thurber. At first Molly does not see Terence, but then he swings this Rachel around with a flip of her skirts an' the two of them are face to face. There is a sort of swift, hurt surprise in Molly's eyes for a minute; then she tips her chin up just a little an' goes on with her hand on Martin Fenn's arm.

"Well, it has sobered Terence a little. He does not wait for the end of the dance, but takes Rachel back to her seat, an' is about to go toward where Molly is sittin', when Jack Lait, who has seen the whole thing, catches his eye. Jack Lait motions with his head, an' so Terence —bein' a young fool—follows him outside. Lait takes a flat bottle from his hip pocket.

" 'It is givin' ye the go-by that lady is,' says Jack Lait, laughin'. 'Since it is plain that ye have no knowledge of the proper way to handle a woman I will be givin' ye some good advice on the subject.'

"The liquor is beginnin' to burn warm in Terence again an' he has no wish to appear inexperienced in Jack Lait's eyes, so he swaggers a little an' says:

" 'The go-by, is it? 'Tis the next dance that she will be steppin' with me, Jack Lait, for I can handle my women as well as the next an' better than most. Do ye stand yourself in the doorway an' watch.'

"With that he goes back into the dance room an' across the floor to where Molly O'Dean is still sittin' with her mother an' Martin Fenn.

"This Terence is a little unsteady on his feet, but he stops in front of the three of them an' stands there smirkin' like a great baboon.

" 'Tis me belief that the next is our dance, Molly darlin',' he says.

"She looks at him long an' steady for a minute, an' then she says, with nothing whatever in the voice of her, 'Ye are mistaken, Terence. The next is not our dance, nor the one after, nor any ever again.'

" 'What is it that ye mean?' he asks, gawkin' at her stupid.

"Without takin' her eyes off him she reaches out an' places her hand easy on Martin Fenn's arm, an' after a while, the meanin' of the thing penetrates the whiskey fog which is hangin' over this Terence's brain—if a man like that could be said to have a brain. He turns slow an' walks back to where Jack Lait is standin' in the door an' laughin' at him.

"WELL, the hurt an' the shame of it begin to cut into him presently, but his good friend Jack Lait is there with the flat bottle to help him forget. After a while they drive back to the Tavern, runnin' the horses an' whoopin' an' yellin' like red Indians through the night. There is more to drink there, an' Terence takes his share.

"It is close to daylight when the thing happens. Jack Lait is leanin' against the bar with a glass in his hand. His talk is about women, an' it is rough an' unpleasant talk, even in that crowd. He mentions Molly O'Dean by name, an' he says things that should be said about no woman, good or bad.

" 'It is a lucky lad that ye are, Terence, to be rid of her,' he says. 'There are plenty—'

"A strange thing, but his words have cut the drunkenness away from Terence as ye would slice off the husk of a melon. 'I give ye the lie in your teeth, Jack Lait!' he interrupts, an' he slaps the glass out of the man's hand.

"Well, this Jack Lait was drunk, but he was a big man an' a wicked fighter, drunk or sober. He stands there for a split second, surprised, an' then his lips crawl up off his teeth in a crooked grin. He hits Terence fair in the face of him, drivin' him clear off his feet an' onto the floor against the wall. Terence rolls away just as Lait jumps forward to stomp him into a mush with the spiked boots he is wearin'. One of them catches Terence as it is an' rips a twelve inch gash along the ribs of him, but he gets to his feet.

"It was a nasty fight an' it went on for a long while, but the end come quick an' sudden. Jack Lait was lungin' forward when Terence caught him flush beneath the ear—maybe I haven't said so, but this Terence was a big man in his own right an' the weight of his body was behind that blow. Jack Lait tipped over backwards; even as he fell, ye could see the whites of his eyes turn up. For a minute there is a great quiet in the room, while Terence stands there rubbin' his right fist in the palm of his left hand an' lookin' dazed.

"Then Blondy Robeson kneels down an' lifts one of Jack Lait's eyelids up to look at the eye of him. There is a scared look on Blondy's face. He pulls open Jack Lait's shirt an' feels for his heart beat, an' then gets up quick.

" 'Dead!' he says in a shaky voice. 'By God, I'm gettin' out of here!'

"In another minute they have gone an' the big room is empty except for Jack Lait layin' there on the floor an' this Terence still standin' over him an' rubbin' his right fist in the palm of his left hand. His clothes is half tore off, an' the blood is smeared across his face an' he is cold sober now. He was realizin' now, you understand, that he had reached that bend in the road from which there was no turnin' back—the same as Father Mulcahey had told him.

"Presently he walks slow to the door an' out into the moonlight. The dawn is not far away an' there is a sweet an' coolin' wind against the face of him. The knowledge of what he has thrown away comes over him sudden, an' is dark an' bitter gall in the mouth of him as he stands there lookin' down the road in the direction in which Molly O'Dean's house lies. Then he is turnin' away when a voice stops him.

" 'Terence!" the voice says, an' he turns an' sees that it is Martin Fenn who is standin' there in the shadow close by the Tavern wall. 'I have been waitin' to speak to ye, Terence.'

" 'I have no wish to have talk with ye," Terence tells him short. 'Do ye be on the way of ye, Martin Fenn.'

" 'No,' says Martin Fenn, 'I have been waitin' here for a long time to speak with ye. Now that ye have done—what ye have done—it is important that ye listen.'

" 'An' what have I done, damn ye?'

" 'Ye know it well, Terence. Jack Lait lies in there dead by your hand, an' it is in the mind of ye to run now.'

" 'Aye,' this Terence says harsh. 'Run I will. I have no wish to hang at the end of a rope, but it is no business of yours, Martin Fenn.'

" 'Ye must not run, Terence,' Martin Fenn tells him cool. 'Instead ye must come with me an' face this thing that ye have done.'

"There is black, bitter anger risin' in

Terence's voice. He says: 'Ye have stolen Molly O'Dean away from me, Martin Fenn, an' that is not enough. Ye must see me hang as well! Will ye stand aside, man?'

"'I will not, Terrence. Ye must come with me, I tell ye!'

"Terence hit him, then, an' he tipped backward an' into the dust. Two minutes later Terence has got on his horse an' turned him into the long road that Father Mulcahey has warned him off."

PADDY DROGHEDA stops there. He lifts his beer mug, but it is empty an' he bangs it hard on the table to call the waiter. "A bottle of your best whiskey, ye yellow heathen!" he says as the Chino comes up.

"'Tis me old father that has told me that a man would do well not to mix beer an' whiskey, Sergint," I protest as the waiter shuffles away. "Besides, the hour is late, an' I am thinkin' that it would be a good thing if we was to turn ourselves back toward camp now."

I have not kept count of the beers that he has taken, but they have been many an' the black recklessness is deeper across his face. He pushes his hat back and begins to roll another cigarette while he stares at me with them eyes of his in which the green is beginnin' to come again.

"Recruit O'Hare," he says, slow an' easy, "ye would not be presumin' to give advice to an old soldier like meself, would you?"

I am worried, for I have a great liking an' a great admiration for Paddy Drogheda and I can see by the face of him that the black dog is ridin' him this night. Maybe it is the story which he has just finished; maybe not. Anyway, I push back me chair an' stand up.

"A bit of air will be doin' us good," I urge, "an' it is a long march back to camp."

The waiter comes up then with a black bottle an' a glass an' sets them on the table. Paddy Drogheda pulls out the cork an' pours a big drink; then he holds up his glass an' grins the crooked grin of him at me.

"To the horns on the head of ye," he says, an' tips all down in a long swallow.

I have no understandin' of the meaning of his words, but I can see by the face of him that trouble lies ahead this night. He sets there with the lamplight across the brown face of him—he was a handsome man, as maybe I have told ye—an' there is a hell at the back of his eyes.

"Shall we go now, Sergint Drogheda?" I asks him again.

"Ye shall go, Recruit O'Hare," he says. "As for meself, I will stay on yet awhile. The night is yet young, an' there is time for a bit of fun yet."

"Will ye not come with me, Sergint?"

"Damn ye!" he says, an' there is a note in his voice which carries warnin'. "Do ye get out of me sight—an' quickly!"

I stop for a minute to look back as I go out the door. A slim, brown girl with a flower in the hair of her has come to stand by him at his table, an' Paddy Drogheda has an arm about her waist while he is lookin' up at her with that crooked smile of his which women find hard to resist. His other hand is reachin' for the black bottle in front of him.

Me thoughts are sober in me as I go down the road toward camp that night. Sudden I understand that Paddy Drogheda is not only one of the wickedest men that I have ever met up with—but one of the saddest, as well.

CHAPTER II

"DO YOU FOLLOW ME!"

IT IS just after Retreat the next night when I meet up with a feller called Jake Longino—a dough-faced infantry recruit who had come over with me on the same transport. His regiment is camped next to ours, an' he has wandered over to try an' borrow tobacco from me—he bein' the kind who borrows tobacco but never returns it whatever.

"'Tis in me mind that I have heard ye speak disparagin' words about the infantry," he says, smilin' his nasty little smile an' sittin' down on me bunk.

Now I do not like this Longino an' I have no wish to loan him more tobacco. so I am somewhat curt in me reply.

"Ye are mistakin'," I tell him. " 'Tis a good an' useful branch. Did we not have it, where would we put the halt an' crippled misfits—yourself bein' a fair example—that the cavalry would not take as buglers even?"

He smiles nasty again an' I know that he has not come to borrow tobacco after all. He has something up his sleeve.

"High an' mighty, ain't we?" he says smug. "Still, I hear that it is a line sergint out of this troop that they have down in the guardhouse, charged with tearin' up half of the town last night."

"Ye lie by the clock, Jake Longino," I tell him, but me heart is sick in me.

"A sergint by the name of Paddy Drogheda," he says sly, watchin' me out of the corner of his eye.

'Tis more than I can stand to see the putty face of him grinnin' at me there from me own bunk, so I take him by the back of the neck an' the slack of the trousers an' I throw him out into the troop street, where he sprawls in the dust like the fat toad he is.

"Do ye get on back to your kennel, ye nasty doughfoot," I tell him. "The smell of ye is an offense in a decent cavalry camp."

He gets up an' looks at me, but he does not like what he sees in me eye and he takes himself off. Presently I am on me way to the main guardhouse.

The sergint of the guard is a cavalryman an' a kindly man, an' he gives me permission to go in an' see Paddy Drogheda. A corpril goes with me an' unlocks the cell door, standin' by outside to see that all is in accordance with the rules an' regulations, an' that I do not give Paddy Drogheda a saw to saw through the bars with or a pick to dig up the floor.

The sunset is comin' in through the window of the cell room, an' Paddy Drogheda is sittin' there on the edge of his cot with the red light siftin' down across his shoulders.

He looks up, an' for a moment I do not recognize the man.

His face is drawn into deep an' weary lines, an' his eyes seem set far back into his head so that he looks like an old man. His uniform is torn an' soiled with mud, an' there is dried blood in his hair an' down the side of the face of him. It is his eyes that I look at, though. There is the look in them of a man who understands himself too well, an' a tiredness which hurt ye to look at.

He sits there an' looks at me like I was a stranger. Then he says finally: "Do ye go away, Recruit O'Hare. It is me wish to be alone."

His voice is hoarse an' thick still, an' I note that the knuckles of his right hand are skinned bad. I know sudden that I want to help Paddy Drogheda as I have never wanted to help anybody else.

"Is there nothin' that I can do for ye, Sergint?" I ask him earnest.

"Ye can take yourself to hell an' away from here."

Well, there is nothin' more to say. I turn back toward the door, where the corpril of the guard is jinglin' his keys. I am almost there when Paddy Drogheda's voice stops me.

He says: "It was a kindly thing that ye meant, Recruit O'Hare. I will not be forgettin' it. Now I will bid ye good night."

WELL, two days pass an' Paddy Drogheda does not come back to the outfit. The rumor goes around that he is to be tried by a general courts-martial, for he has done much in the hours between when I leave him at Woo Fee's cafe an' see him again in the guardhouse. He has wrecked a dance hall belongin' to one Felix Castro an' he has engaged in a fight with this Mister Castro an' three of his friends—the Castro faction comin' out second best, so to speak. He has stole a *calesa* an' has galloped up an' down the streets of Zamboango singin': "Damn, damn, damn the *Insurrectos!*" in a loud if unmusical voice. Finally he has called upon the commandin' general at his quarters an' has pounded on the door at four-thirty o'clock of the mornin' until the Old Man, himself, has come down to see what the thus-an'-so all the fuss is about.

Well, such action on the part of a senior line sergint of cavalry is consided highly prejudicial to military order an' discipline—an' what is worse, the

commandin' general is well informed as to the details of Paddy Drogheda's on the night in question. The bettin' about the troop is even money that Paddy will have his stripes took away an' do six months' time to boot, this not bein' the first time that he has fell from grace.

Howsoever, a Moro chief by the name of Datto Bacolod takes a hand just then.

I am sittin' in me tent in the evenin' when sudden I hear a bugle bust out shrill an' brassy. Then there is a wondrous poundin' of feet outside, an' Ben Stoddard, who shares the tent with me, comes through the doorway, half takin' the tent pole along with him in his hurry. He grabs his saddle roll an starts pushin' gear into it. I can see that there is a great excitement in the face of him.

"Do ye hurry the fat stern of ye an' not be sittin' there with your mouth open as though ye hoped to catch a fly," he says over his shoulder. "The outfit is movin' out an' that right fast, me bucko!"

"Movin' where?" I ask him, but I am already grabbin' at me own equipment.

"It is listenin' by the orderly tent that I was," he tells me, "an' there I am hearin' the cap'n say that we go up toward the Sorgalum Plateau, where murder an' insurrection has broke out something scandalous."

Well, that camp is as busy as a bee hive for maybe an hour, an' then the regiment rides out into the starlight in a column of fours an' we head toward the mountains. I have gathered a bit of the story together by now.

It seems that for some months the Moros up in the country that we're headin' for have been uncommon good. They have farmed their farms an' have generally disported themselves as though butter wouldn't melt in the mouths of them—which, I have learned, is a bad sign as far as Moros are concerned. Well, no matter. Anyway, so good have they been that the half company of infantry, which has been stationed at Bailal to watch them, has grown fat an' lazy an' careless.

Howsoever, these particular Moros are not the simple an' innocent children of nature which the infantry have took them to be. Their chief, who is named Datto Bacolod an' who is as filled with guile as a watermelon is filled with water, has been gettin' them ready quiet—fillin' them up with the frenzy of a holy war, to say nothin' of hashish on the side. An' when he judges the time is ripe he strikes.

They pour down on this half company of poor doughfoots in the middle of a dark night, an' they smite them hip an' thigh, so to speak. When the yellin' has died down the half company is a half company no more. Most of them are well hacked corpses scattered about the streets of Bailal, an' the rest are dispersin' themselves through the jungle with Datto Bacolod's merry little men in hot pursuit. It is one such fugitive who has made his way back to Zamboango bringin' word of the killin'—which is two days old now.

WELL, we ride all night, an' I am filled with a sort of excitement which is headier than liquor an' more lastin'. The moon comes up just after midnight, an' it was a sight that I can still remember. The column was windin' over the crest of a little hill as I looked back an' sudden I feel proud an' happy that I am there.

The moonlight makes dancin' spots of brightness on the metal of the accoutrements an' you can hear the soft jingle of bit chains an' the squeal of saddle leather an' a horse snortin' eager now an' then. The regiment is trailed out like a long black string, with the troopers swingin' easy in their saddles an' the horses up to their bellies in the *coogan* grass.

" 'Tis a grand thing to ride out so," I say to Ben Stoddard, who rides in the set of fours with me.

Ben Stoddard says bad words an' eases himself in his saddle a little. He has chased the little brown brothers before.

" 'Tis plain that ye have no romance in ye, Ben Stoddard," I tell him reproachful, as we ride along.

"Maybe I have not," he tells me sour, "but instead I have a boil upon the person of me which is unpleasant intimate with me saddle. So do ye be quiet, recruit, an' hope that come this hour to-

morrow ye are still wearin' your lump of a head upon the shoulders of ye."

"Ye think that the little brown lads will stand up to us an' give us a fight of it, then?" I ask him.

"They will that," Ben tells me. He swears some more as his horse stumbles a little an' jolts him against the saddle. There is somewhat of a morose satisfaction in his voice as he goes on. "The regimint has campaigned against Datto Bacolod before. He is a wily an' a dangerous fighter, an' he has good reason to remember us unkindly. I'll give ye a word of advice, recruit."

"Speak on," I tell him.

"It may be, when the fightin' starts, that ye will get cut off from the troop—wounded, perhaps. Should such happen get under cover an' lay quiet an' easy, makin' no noise, an' it is likely that the troop will come back an' find ye."

Ben Stoddard stopped for a minute an' spat out between the ears of his horse. Sudden a cold wind chills me a little an' I understand what I hadn't known before—that this is, in truth, no pleasure ride in the moonlight. Ben goes on, dry an' dispassionate.

"Howsoever, should the troop not come back, an' should ye see the little brown men creepin' around to take a prisoner of ye—then do ye put the barrel of your pistol in the mouth of ye, Recruit O'Hare, an' pull the trigger. Ye will die easier so than at Datto Bacolod's hands."

Well, I didn't talk no more after that, an' I didn't look back to admire the sight that the regiment made strung out across the *coogan* grass.

JUST after daybreak we halted for an hour in the edge of the rollin' hills which climb up to the Sorgalum Plateau. The smell of coffee is a comfortin' thing in the mornin', an' there is the cheerful sound of horses chompin' at their grain an' men laughin'. I am squattin' on me heels, back against a tree while I roll me a smoke, when I see this trooper ride in. It is still half dark under the trees an' I do not recognize him at the moment.

Cap'n McGillicuddy is sittin' on the ground maybe twenty feet away while he chews on a piece of hard bread, an' this trooper turns the head of his horse that way an' dismounts. I see by the way he stands, then, that it is Sergint Paddy Drogheda, who we have left in jail back in Zamboango. The words of the two of them come to me ears clear.

"Sergint Drogheda reportin' for duty with the troop, sir," Paddy is sayin'.

Cap'n McGillicuddy gets up slow, still munchin' on the bit of dried bread. He is a big man with a grand pair of shoulders to him, an' a better troop commander never put a leg across a horse. He looks at Paddy Drogheda for a long minute.

"So it is releasin' ye that they were, is it, Sergint Drogheda? It was a flat refusal that I got when I requested them to do the same last night."

"I am reportin' for duty, sir," Paddy Drogheda repeats, an' I detect a faint stubbornness in the voice of the man.

Cap'n McGillicuddy looks for a minute more an' then he laughs sudden.

"Sergint," he says, "if I had any idea that ye had broken out of the jail-house in Zamboango an' had followed the troop up into the hills against all orders to the contrary, I would have no choice but to put the irons upon ye an' send ye back with a corporal's guard at the back of ye. Howsoever, I have no such ideas. It is happy that I am to see ye, Sergint!"

"Thank ye, sir," Paddy Drogheda says quiet. He knows well that Cap'n McGillicuddy knows that he has broken jail in Zamboango.

The cap'n goes on. "We march again presently, Sergint, an' the troop forms the advance guard for the regimint. Ye are acquainted with the country, are ye not?"

"I am," Paddy Drogheda tells him. "Also I am acquainted with Datto Bacolod."

For a minute Cap'n McGillicuddy stands there fingerin' his mustache. Then he nods slow and says thoughtful: "Aye, it is remembering that I am now." He is quiet for a moment an' then he says brusque: "Ye will lead the point this mornin', Sergint. Take the first squad an' be ready to move out in a half an hour. Do ye understand?"

"Yes sir," Paddy Drogheda tells him.

I am in the first squad, an' it is glad that I am to know that I will ride with Sergint Paddy Drogheda that mornin'.

WE MOVE out a little later, the eight of us, with Paddy Drogheda in the lead. He has said nothing to us other than to give the command to saddle an' to mount, but I see that there is a strange peacefulness about the face of the man. The old dark recklessness is gone, an' I wonder about that. I see Ben Stoddard lookin', with a little puzzlement in his eyes, an' I know that he has seen the same as I have.

An excitement lays hold of me as we set our horses into a trot, for the point is the place of honor—an' the place of danger, as well—in a column marchin' in hostile country.

We ride well spread out an', after maybe half an hour, I look back an' see the head of the main body of the regiment debouchin' from the woods where we have halted.

We climb steady for better than four hours. Then we swing away to the right an' come out on a high shoulder. Ahead of us is maybe fifteen miles of broken country—stream beds filled with thick jungle an' separated by ridges covered with *coogan* grass. Bad country for cavalry. The ridges slope down to a line of low hills, an' stretchin' for miles beyond is a flat valley.

Paddy Drogheda has reined his horse in beside me an' he says, half to himself: "It's lookin' that way toward the Sorgalum country that ye are, Recruit O'Hare. A pretty country, an' yet a wicked one. Bailal, where the infantry was, lies under the rim yonder; beyond are Datto Bacolod's villages."

I remember what I have heard Paddy Drogheda say this mornin' an' me curiosity gets the better of me.

"Ye know this Datto Bacolod, Sergint?" I ask.

There is a tight little smile to the lips of Paddy Drogheda as he answers me. "I know Datto Bacolod—an' Datto Bacolod knows me, Recruit O'Hare. Trot—march!"

At eleven in the mornin' we halt for a half an hour, an' presently Cap'n McGillicuddy rides up from the advance guard. Paddy Drogheda goes to meet him.

"We're pushin' on to the rim tonight, Sergint," the cap'n says. "If the valley looks clear work on out beyond Bailal an' pick out a good outpost line. We'll bivouac there tonight an' clean out the valley come mornin'. Is it clear?"

"It is clear, sir," Sergint Drogheda tells him.

Like I said, it is bad country for cavalry. Though we see hide nor hair of a Moro, men an' horses are well played out after we have made that fifteen miles. Ben Stoddard is reelin' in his saddle an' his face is pale an' drawn when finally we come out on the rim above the valley at maybe four in the afternoon. Bailal lays below us, but there is nothin' there now except the shells of burned buildings. I can hear Sammy Michelson, on my life, swearin' deep in his throat as he reins in his horse an' looks down.

It is not a pretty sight. For a moment the sickness comes over me while I looked. Then Paddy Drogheda's voice steadies us.

"Do ye follow me," he says.

He puts his horse at the slope an' we go down, well spread out an' with our carbines out of the boots an' laid across the knees of us. It don't take any seventh son of a seventh son now to understand that we are in hostile country—not after seein' what is left of Bailal town. Howsoever, behind us on the rim we can hear the rest of the advance guard arrivin', an' we know that they'll be coverin' us with their fire. The thought is comforting.

We strike the valley floor, an' Paddy Drogheda swings us away to the left at a slow trot toward where a little risin' ground lifts up in the late sunshine of the afternoon. I guess that it is here that we will be establishin' the outpost line—there bein' open ground beyond for a matter of maybe three-quarters of a mile.

Well, it happens sudden.

We have just reached this little rise when all hell breaks loose from a thick patch of *coogan* grass on our right

flank. It is a strange thing an' one which I have not forgot, although I have looked upon many strange things since. One minute there is nothin' there but the quiet of the valley in front; the next minute a half a hundred howlin' demons has sprouted out of that empty ground an' are chargin' down on us with a speed which I wouldn't have believed if I hadn't seen it.

It was no pleasant sight. Crazy with hashish, as I learned later, they have come out to kill an' be killed. The knowledge is scant comfort to the eight of us as we sit there for a split second watchin' the sunlight flicker along the wavy blades of them *krises*. Then, sudden, panic takes me an' I am jerkin' my horse around. It is Sergint Paddy Drogheda's voice that halts me.

"Steady!" he says, thin an' harsh. "Dismount, damn ye! Set your sights at two hundred yards an' make your shots count! The troop is comin' behind"

'TIS a strange an' wonderful thing the way one man, who has no fear in him, can lay his will onto others at such a time. Presently the eight of us are spread out on our bellies an' the steady *smack-spang* of the Krag-Jorgensons is echoing across the valley.

They come on though, these little brown men—crazy mad an' carin' for nothing but to kill before they die. One of them is a dozen yards in front of the rest, an' I lay my sights on him twice an' feel the rock of the rifle butt against my shoulder, but he comes on. He is maybe fifty yards away when Paddy Drogheda stands up beside me.

"I will take him," he says. "Do ye put your fire into the left of them, Recruit O'Hare!"

They are comin' on still, but it is in the mind of me that they are waverin' a little, as I shift around an' put five shots rapid into the thick of them on the left. I hear the wicked bang of Paddy Drogheda's gun over my head, an' from the tail of me eye I see the leadin' runner somersault over an' splash down in the dust. Dennis O'Coultan is shoutin' crazy beside me.

Then I hear the pound of runnin' horses an' the troop roars by the flank of us. For a moment there is a monstrous brawlin' an' millin' out there with the yellow dust hidin' the action behind a thick curtain.

Then the thing is all over an' the troop is trottin' back, leaving sprawled figures to mark where they had done their work. Presently we fan out on a big semicircle to outpost the regiment, which is bivouacin' in front of Bailal for the night.

Well, dark comes down sudden an' the quiet settles over the valley, there bein' no further sign of Moros. It is maybe nine o'clock an' I am cookin' a pot of coffee for Ben Stoddard an' myself over a little brush fire when Sergint Paddy Drogheda comes in from a round of the posts. He squats down by the fire an' I pass him a mug of coffee. He nods his thanks an' begins to roll a cigarette.

Presently he grins at me with that crooked smile of his an' asks: "An' how do ye like campaignin' in the cavalry by now, Recruit O'Hare?"

I have been wishin' myself safe back on me father's farm in Walla Walla, Washington, for the memory of them howlin' devils of the afternoon is still strong upon me. But I would not let him see it. I drink deep at me coffee an' stir the fire with a little stick while I pretend to consider his question. Since the dark has come down I have had the uneasy feelin' that there is maybe a half a thousand wicked an' black little eyes watchin' us from out there in the darkness.

"It is a grand an' rare thing, Sergint," I tell him finally. But me heart is not in it an' he knows it.

He is quiet for a moment—Ben Stoddard is keepin' watch on Post Number Five an' the two of us are alone. Paddy Drogheda fires the end of a little stick an' holds it up to the tip of his cigarette an', for a minute, I see the red glow bright against the face of him. The peace, which I have remarked before, is deeper across his mouth now—the same look as a man might wear who has run a long race an' is about to lay himself down an' rest after it.

"Make your shots count. The troop is comin' behind."

He says presently: " 'Tis like that we are all the same after our first fight, kid. I remember me own—an' it was not so many years ago, at that. Now I am thinkin' that I have come to me last fight."

There is a quiet to the way he says it that chills me so that, for the moment, I forget the things that I have seen an' done that afternoon. Then I am a little angry, for Paddy Drogheda was by way of bein' a hero of mine.

"What talk is this, Sergint?" I ask him. "It is soundin' like the old grandmother of me that ye are."

Paddy Drogheda hitches Ben Stoddard's saddle around so that he can rest his shoulders against it an' he does not answer me at once. When he does speak his voice is soft an' thoughtful.

"I have told ye that I am known to this Datto Bacolod. What I have not told ye is that he would rather take me prisoner than to capture the colonel himself, together with the best troop in the regimint. There will be heavy fightin' tomorrow. These Moros are as good fightin' men as ye will find in a long day's march, an' they outnumber us maybe ten to one. In that fightin' Datto Bacolod an' his little brown men will be lookin' particular for Paddy Drogheda."

I laugh, but the sound does not seem cheerful, even to meself. There is something about the night which lends a weight to Paddy Drogheda's words.

" 'Tis an important man that ye are, Sergint," I try to say, sarcastic, "that Datto Bacolod should single ye out of the rest of the regimint. It is doubtin' I am that he even knows that ye are here. Though maybe I am wrong."

Paddy Drogheda is offended an' the quiet of his voice warns me that he speaks the truth.

"Datto Bacolod knows," he tells me. "It was a brother of his whom I stood an' killed in the rush this afternoon. By now the word has gone back."

"This is a thing that I do not understand, Sergint. He will single ye out. Why?"

"Because," Paddy Drogheda says slow, "I have put a shame upon him an' his house which only me death—an' that at his own hands—will wipe away. It was not me wish to put the shame upon him, but the thing is done an' it cannot be helped now."

HE IS quiet for a moment an' then goes on, while I huddle meself closer to the fire an' listen to all the little noises which go on out there in the dark.

"It was a woman who caused the thing," Paddy Drogheda says. "The thing come about this way. Maybe two years ago I come down into the Sorgalum Valley with a half platoon. We have been on a long, hard scout up towards the Lake Lanao country an' the horses are played out. Well, the Sorgalum Valley is peaceful at that time, the *datto* bein' friendly, an' we camp at a place up the valley for a time.

"Well, to make a long story short, I meet with this woman one night an' a pretty, black-headed little thing she is with the devil in the eyes of her an' a body which is as ripe an' sweet as a mango. It is not my intention to put the come-hither upon her, but it has been a lonesome scout to Lake Lanao an' one thing leads to another. It is not until the day we march again that I learn that she is one of Datto Bacolod's wives.

"We have broke camp an' the men are mounted up an' ready to ride when she comes. There is blood on the face of her an' she is ready to drop from her runnin'.

" '*Tuan,*' she gasps out, 'ye must ride an' quickly. The understandin' has come to Datto Bacolod!"

" 'Understandin' of what?' I ask her.

" 'The understandin' of the shame which ye an' I have put upon his house, *Tuan!* He will kill ye if ye do not ride quickly!'

"Well, I understand then, too, an' I regret it deep, for Datto Bacolod has been a friend to me in a way. Howsoever, there is nothin' that can be done now except to ride, for I know well what will be the end if we are caught here in the valley.

" 'And you?' I ask the woman. She shivers a little an' looks up the valley.

" 'Take me with you, *tuan,*' she says. 'He will put me to the torture else!'

"There was nothin' else to do, so I took her up across me saddle an' give the word to march. It was none too soon. As it was we had a runnin' fight for the last mile down the valley, but the horses was rested an' we made the rim before Datta Bacolod could get his men well gathered. Howsoever, as we rode away from Sorgalum Valley I knew well that I had put the black shame upon Datto Bacolod's house an' that he would not forget when I came to the valley again.

"Well, we rode back to Zamboango, where the woman left me, as she had left Datto Bacolod. As I have said, the devil was deep in her."

Paddy Drogheda pitched the end of his cigarette into the dyin' coals of the fire an' set about rollin' a fresh one for himself. The moon was beginnin' to poke above the rim behind Bailal Town, an' it seemed as though the eerie light of it was worse than the dark.

I say, after a little: "Ye broke jail back in Zamboango to come on this campaign, Sergint, an' ye knew that we rode toward the Sorgalum Plateau. Why did ye do it?"

"It is not well to pry into the reasons which move men to do the things that they do, Recruit O'Hare," he tells me soft. "Maybe it was the knowledge that blood would be spilled here in the valley an' that that blood would be upon the soul of me—for have I not caused the trouble by the black wrong I have done to Datto Bacolod?"

"It is not likely," I tell him. "It is me observation that one Moro is much like another, an' that the tribe of them fatten upon riot an' insurrection similar to the one we are now engaged upon."

Paddy Drogheda shakes his head stubborn, an' I can see that the lips of him are shut tight an' hard. The black dog has leaped far upon his shoulders this night.

"Trouble an' sorrow I have left behind me in the places where I have walked in me life," he says sober. "I have not wished it, but so it has been. Do ye listen to me yet a little while, Recruit O'Hare, an' maybe then ye will understand that it is so."

I listen, an' there, sittin' beside a dyin' fire in the Sorgalum Valley, I hear for the first time the yarn which I have repeated for ye at the beginning of this story. An outlandish tale, maybe, but hearin' it as I heard it there in the moonlight it was not hard to believe. I try to laugh when he is done.

"An' ye do give credit to an old wives'

tale such as that, Sergint Drogheda?"

I can feel his eyes on me steady.

"Ye saw me there in the cell at Zamboango," he says. "That is the devil's mark that is onto the clan of Drogheda —an' it will not come off."

"It is nonsense that ye talk of, Sergint!" I tell him. I am angry an' a little scared, all at once, I say then, an' the words do not sound foolish in the ears of me: "But the promise that the Ould Wan made, Sergint! Do ye not see? Ye have the same right to wrestle with him as did the first of your clan!"

"Aye," he tells me slow. "I have wrestled. I have wrestled many times, Recruit O'Hare, but I have not won. Ye will recall that he boasted that but one —a bearded man down in the Jordan Valley—had ever won from him."

A voice calls out sudden against the night from the line of outposts, an' Paddy Drogheda looks at his watch an' stands up.

" 'Tis time to make a round of the posts," he says under his breath.

He stands there for a moment lookin' down at me. Then he fumbles a minute at the inside of his shirt an' steps around what is left of the fire to where I am sittin'.

"I would ask a favor of ye, Recruit O'Hare," he says. "Ye will do it?"

I nod, not speakin', an' he hands me a little locket with a gold chain to it. It is still warm from bein' about his neck.

"I would be obliged to ye if ye would send that to Molly O'Dean back in Shadyside, Indiana."

I take it from his hand an' then I hear the soft rustle of the grass as he moves out toward where the outposts are. I am lonesome an' scared sudden as I sit there listenin' to him go.

CHAPTER III

Last Command

WELL, we were attacked just before dawn breaks, an' the day that followed was as hot an' bloody as I can call to mind. Like Paddy Drogheda has said, there were many of the little brown men an' they were right tough fighters.

We went forward on foot, leavin' the horses behind us, an' by late afternoon we have gone maybe six miles up the valley to where a big mud fort blocks the way. We halt here for a bit to reorganize, an' we can see hundreds of Moros linin' the walls an' more hundreds pourin' into the fort from up the valley.

The first squad is lyin' over on the left of the line, firin' slow an' waitin' for the word to advance. Paddy Drogheda crawls up beside me.

"That is Dundan Fort, where Datto Bacolod has his headquarters," he says to me. "It will be a hard nut to crack, I'm thinkin'."

I agree with him. I can see the fort plain, an' it is not an encouragin' sight to men who have fought all day through a sun like a broilin' fire. There is a big ditch in front of it an' walls which are maybe twelve feet high, an' behind those walls are fighters by the hundred. I glance at Paddy Drogheda.

I am a little cheered to see that apparent the black dog of last night has left him. He is studyin' the walls with his eyes squinted a little an' he is whistlin' between his teeth. There is a hint of that dark recklessness across his face again. Then Cap'n McGillicuddy crawls up onto the line beside us.

He has got dried blood down one cheek an' his shirt is more than somewhat tore away, but his face is placid an' free from worry. He studies the fort likewise an' then he turns around to Paddy Drogheda.

" 'Tis goin' to be bad if we must take it by assault," he says. Then he points off to the left, to where a long tongue of woods stretches up from the river almost to the walls of the fort. "It might be that there is a covered way there where a squadron could move up an' take them in the flank. Would ye be knowin' whether such a way exists in that woods, Sergint?"

Paddy Drogheda shakes his head. "I have never been along the river, sir."

Cap'n McGillicuddy spits an' squints into the sun. He says, half to himself: "If it is rank jungle it cannot be done, for the column will have no time to cut their

way through. If there is a track there, though, it will mean the savin' of the lives of many."

Paddy Drogheda nods.

"Where are the horses bein' held, sir?" he asks.

"A mile back in the little ravine where we had the bit of hot work maybe an hour gone," the cap'n tells him. "Ye have a plan, Sergint?"

"Sundown is close upon us," Paddy Drogheda tells him. "It would be a good thing if the boys was to lay where they are until the moonrise. Meanwhile I will go back an' get me horse an' reconnoiter towards the river. It may be that as the dark comes down I can get into the tongue of woods an' can then bring back the word as to whether or not it is passable for a squadron."

Cap'n McGillicuddy looks at Paddy Drogheda for a long minute an' then he nods.

"I will acquaint the colonel with the possibility," he says. "In the meantime, do ye be gettin' back to the horse lines. The dark comes down fast in this country an' ye must be back before the moon comes up. How many men do ye wish with ye, Sergint?"

" 'Tis a one man job, sir," Paddy Drogheda tells him. "I will be goin' alone."

"Do ye take the first squad, Sergint," he says.

" 'Tis me belief—"

The cap'n raises his hand an' stops him. "One man, alone, might not come back," he says, gentle.

"Yes, sir," Paddy Drogheda answers, but ye can tell by the face of him that he would have preferred to go alone.

Well, we go back to the horses an' wait there for a matter of maybe half an hour. Then, just as the dusk is beginnin' to drop down fast, Cap'n McGillicuddy comes up.

"The regimint will lay where it is until moon-up," he says, "an' God grant that ye are back by then. May luck ride with ye."

WE ride off in single file with our carbines across our knees an' the horse holders lookin' after us an' shakin' their heads. Paddy Drogheda heads up-river to the left with us strung out behind him. The night has grown quiet an' the sound of our horses breastin' the grass seems like a thunder in the ears of us.

We have rode for maybe half an hour when Paddy Drogheda stops us with a low command. At his word we ride up close an' sit listenin' for a moment. Ahead is a dark shadow which marks the woods. We are in a little hollow in the river bottom, open on three sides an' with the woods closin' the fourth.

"Ben Stoddard," Paddy Drogheda says.

"Here," Ben answers him.

"Ye are in charge of the patrol, Ben," Paddy Drogheda says. "Do ye hold it here while I go ahead an' reconnoiter the woods a bit first. Should I not be back by eight-thirty ye will return an' report that the woods is held by Moros. Do ye understand?"

"I understand," Ben Stoddard answers him.

He dismounts, leavin' his carbine in the boot an' takin' only his sidearm with him. For a minute I can see the dim shape of his shoulders as he moves forward. Then the darkness swallows him up, an' we dismount slow to wait. Firin' has broken out from Dundan Fort which is make two miles off to the left of us again an' the sound is cheerin', somehow. At least it takes the emptiness out of the night.

We wait for maybe half an hour, an' then the worry of it gets into me an' I tell Ben Stoddard the thing that the cap'n has said that afternoon. Ben is a good man an' quiet, but I can see that he is uneasy as he looks at that black finger of woods stretchin' out in front of us. Finally he gets up.

"Mount," he says low. "We are goin' on in to look for Paddy Drogheda."

A moment later we are in the woods, with the damp, mouldy smell of it reachin' out to curl around us. It is more open than it has looked from a distance, an' we are able to pick our way along slow with just a little choppin' here an' there where the creepers had grown together in a wall in front of us. After maybe fifteen minutes we come out onto the level floor of a ravine an' hit into a broad track runnin' due north. There is room for

fours to ride abreast here an' we know, sudden, that this is the way which we have been lookin' for.

Ben Stoddard, who is ridin' ahead, reins up an' waits for the rest of us to close in.

Ben says worried: "We have found out what we come to find an' it's gettin' back that we had better be, for it will be full moon rise before long. Still, there is Paddy Drogheda."

The light is beginnin' to grow a little stronger an' I see that the walls of the ravine is steep on either side of us—a nasty place.

"Sammy," Ben says then, "do ye think that you an' Pete can find your way back to the regimint?"

"Aye," Sammy Michelson tells him.

"Do ye be on your way, then. The rest of us will wait—in case Paddy Drogheda should come back."

The thing happens sudden.

It is not two minutes after Sammy Michelson an' Pete have walked their horses back down the ravine in the half moonlight when we hear a scream that lifts the hair along the backs of the necks of us. There was no mistakin' that sound—it was the noise which a man makes when dyin'. In that split second I know that Sammy Michelson an' Pete ain't ever goin' back to the regimint.

Ben Stoddard jerks his horse about an' his voice lifts hoarse.

"Follow me!" he yells.

Then the *spang* of a single shot rips out across the night an' Ben rocks in his saddle an' goes down, one foot in the stirrup still an' his head draggin' as his horse bolts into the trees. Sudden that little hollow is full of men—little brown men that swarm over us like a wave rolls over sand. I shoot twice into that howlin' mob an' then something hits me vicious in the back of the neck an' I go down.

IT IS maybe ten minutes later that things begin to take shape before me eyes again. The head of me aches with a nasty throb an' I can taste blood. It is surprised that I am to be still alive, howsoever, an' sudden I remember the advice which Ben Stoddard has give me the day before. I try to roll over an' then cold fear strikes into me, for I am bound hand an' foot as ye would tie up a pig for the market.

Feet pad alongside the head of me an' then I am jerked up by me arms an' propped against a tree. The moon is high now an' I have no trouble seein' what is before me, but it is small comfort that I have by the sight.

There is maybe a half a hundred Moros there in the moonlight, standin' quiet on three sides of me. I see Dennis O'Coultan tied similar a half a dozen feet away an', beyond him, is Micky Gallagher. Tom Jessop lies in between us with his head split wide an' a dark puddle spreadin' around him. I am sick but I choke the sickness back in me.

The Moros make a little lane, then, an' a man comes through. He is a small man, but he carries himself with a pride, an' I know that it is Datto Bacolod. He moves up close an' stands lookin' down at me with no expression on his face.

"Where is the Sergint Drogheeda?" he says to me in good English.

Well, I am a kid an' I am sick with the knowledge of what lies ahead for me, but I could not tell him that Paddy Drogheda was afoot somewhere in them woods. I lay there lookin' at him an' his expression does not change as he kicks me in the side.

"Where is the Sergint Drogheeda?"

A voice says quiet: "Right here, Datto Bacolod. Ye have wished to see me?"

I think that maybe it is a dream, but it is not. Paddy Drogheda is standin' there in the moonlight at the open side of the square as calm as though he was conductin' recruit drill back on the parade ground. I see that he has a gun in the hand of him, but he is not pointin' it at anybody an' I think that strange.

The waitin' Moros surge forward a little, but Datto Bacolod lifts the hand of him an' they stay still again. The Datto walks forward slow an' stops maybe a dozen feet from where Paddy is standin'.

"Ah," he says, "Sergint Drogheeda. We have meet again, yess?"

"Yes," Paddy Drogheda tells him.

"I will not bandy words with ye, Datta Bacolod. Ye have three of me friends an' I have come to offer ye a fair exchange for them. Do ye understand?"

The Moro's face does not change, but I can see that the effrontery of the man is puzzlin' him a little. He turns an' looks at the three of us an' then looks back to Paddy Drogheda.

"I do not onderstan' these exchange," he says.

" 'Tis a rule of civilized armies," Paddy Drogheda says impatient. "A sergint for three privates is a fair exchange. Do ye turn them loose an' give me the word of ye that they shall go back safe to the regimint, an' I will come with ye to Fort Dundan as your prisoner."

Datto Bocolod makes a little sound in his throat which is meant for a laugh, but I find no amusement in it. It is out of his head that Paddy Drogheda is, I am thinkin', an' presently the four of us will go to the torture.

Datto Bacolod says: "You make thee joke, Drogheeda. I weel be very glad to have you as thee prisoner, yess. I have wait for that for thee long time. But I weel have these other wan, too."

"No," Paddy Drogheda tells him, an' he moves a little so that a tree is at his back. His gun has swung up sudden so that it covers the Moro. "No, ye will bargain with me as I have said, else I put a bullet into ye where ye stand."

The Moro's lips twist up a little, I see, but he does not move. The little brown men, beyond him, stand there quiet while they wait for his signal.

"You theenk to make me afraid, Sergint Drogheeda? If I'm raise my hand my men weel—so!" The Moro shrugs his shoulders an' it is not hard to get his meanin'. "You theenk to keel them all? No, I do not theenk so."

"I'll be killin' you, though, Datto Bacolod!" Paddy Drogheda's voice lifts. "I'll kill you, an' you'll go to the death of ye with the shame still black upon your house an' your brother's blood unavenged!"

I can see that that got to Datto Bacolod. The mask drops away from his face for a second an' there is sheer, crazy hate there. Paddy Drogheda's voice taunts him.

"It was I that stole the wife of ye, Datto Bacolod! Likewise it was I who killed your brother scarce a twenty-four hours ago! Do ye think that the shame will be less because your men kill me—after I have killed you where ye stand?"

For a minute the two of them stand there with their wills clashin' across that dozen feet of moonlight an' then it is clear that Paddy Drogheda has won. Datto Bacolod jerks his shoulders a little an' his voice is hoarse.

"I will make thee bargain weeth you, Sergint Drogheeda. Your death weel be long, I theenk."

"Do ye cut them loose," Paddy Drogheda says with no emotion in his voice.

The Moro speaks sharp to the men around us, an' one comes forward an' cuts away the ropes with which we are tied. I shiver as the cold steel of the *kris* touches the skin on the wrists of me. Then I am standin' up an' the three of us huddle a little to one side.

"Do ye swear by the Koran that these three shall have safe passage back to the regimint, Datto Bacolod," Paddy Drogheda says in a clear, hard voice.

"I swear," the Moro tells him sullen. Paddy Drogheda looks at me, then, for the first time. "Do ye go back to the regimint an' quickly. Say to Cap'n McGillicuddy that things go well with Sergint Paddy Drogheda. Do ye understand!"

I understand. I am to tell the cap'n that there is a way into the fort through the finger of woods, but the horror of the thing which hangs over Paddy Drogheda is deep in me. I have seen in Datto Bacolod's face what the nature of his death will be.

"Sergint—" I begin but he stops me harsh.

"Do ye understand, Recruit O'Hare?"

"I understand," I tell him, an' the tears are runnin' down the face of me.

WELL, there is much about that night that I do not remember after that. It is much like a dream even to me now. Somehow we get back to the regiment, an' we tell what has happened. Presently a squadron, mounted, swings off toward the river an', after that, the word

is passed along quiet an' we move up closer to the fort.

The story of what has happened to Paddy Drogheda has gone through the regimint, an' the men are crazy wild, so that it is all that the officers can do to keep them from stormin' head on into them mud walls an' dyin' there by platoons. Howsoever, in maybe an hour, we hear fresh firin' from the south an' the shrill singin' of a bugle an' we know that the river squadron is attackin' from the flank.

Cap'n McGillicuddy yells: "Come ye, ye heathen sons!" an' then we are up an' movin' forward while we give tongue like dogs on a trail.

It was hot an' bloody while it lasted, but there was nothin' that could have stopped us that night. We took that fort an' we cleaned it from end to end so that there was nothin' but Moro dead there when day come.

Paddy Drogheda was still alive when we found him. Our attack had took them so sudden that they had had no chance to finish the devil's work that they had been doin'. As we took him down I thought of that other one, of whom he had spoke the night before, who also had wrestled down in the River Jordan valley.

Well, the campaign was ended an' presently the regimint went back to Zamboango. We took Paddy Drogheda with us, for he still lived—though what kept the life in him I wouldn't be knowin'. It was a cruel march, but in time it was over an' then he was in a hospital in Zamboango.

I visited him often but he had little to say, layin' there instead an' lookin' at the ceiling an' smilin' a little with lips which have got a permanent twist now. Then, one day, word comes that the regimint is ordered to Manila an' I go in to say good-by to him. I have been there about ten minutes when a heavy voice comes through the screen which they have put about the bed of him.

" 'Tis Terence Drogheda that I would be seein' this mornin'," the voice says. "A long time it is that I have been lookin' for the rascal, an' it is me understandin' that he is here."

The corps man says: "Sergint Drogheda ain't supposed to have visitors unless they got a special permission. Have ye such?"

I note that a sudden spark has come into Paddy Drogheda's eye an' he half pushes himself up onto an elbow.

"Do ye be lettin' him come in," he says, an' there is more life in his voice than I have heard since that night at Fort Dundan.

A big lump of an infantryman comes around the screen then an' stands lookin' down at the man in the bed. For a long minute Paddy Drogheda lays there lookin' back up at him. Then he smiles this twisted smile of his an' says:

"So it is ye, is it, Martin Fenn?"

"Aye," the infantryman tells him, "an' a long chase ye have led me."

"Well, it is over now," Paddy Drogheda says slow. "Do ye wait a bit until I am well again an' I will go back with ye. It is my remembrance that ye once told me that I could not run from the consequences of me acts. I have found that to be so, Martin Fenn."

" 'Tis glad that I am, Terence," this infantryman tells him solemn, "to know that ye have repented an' are ready to come back to the just deserts of ye."

I was wishful to take him by the neck but Paddy Drogheda stops me. He holds out his hand, an' a pitiful thin hand it is now, an' he says:

"Do ye be on your way, Recruit O'Hare. Good luck to ye, an' maybe one day we will meet again.'

WELL, not much remains to tell.

It is one day in 1924, an' I am on me way across the States in a new Ford which I have bought. In San Francisco there is a transport waitin' to take me back to the Islands, but now I have a two months' furlough an' I am enjoyin' it by travel.

I stop in a pretty little place one afternoon to get gas for me buggy an' I ask the attendant at the fillin' station what the name of the town might be.

"Shadyside," he says proud. "As pret-

ty a little spot as ye are like to find in Indiana."

It is over twenty years since I have heard mention of Shadyside, but the memory of that night in the Sorgalum Valley comes back to me clear as I sit there in me car. 'Tis this town that Paddy Drogheda had come from.

"Have ye ever known a man by the name of Paddy—or maybe Terence—Drogheda?" I ask this feller.

"Sure, an' who doesn't know Judge Drogheda?" this feller asks me. "It is the big white house down the street that is his."

"A brawlin', turbulent sort of a man?" I ask.

This boy looks at me unpleasant.

"Ye will find that in Shadyside such remarks concernin' Judge Drogheda are unkindly taken," he says. "He is, to the contrary, as quiet an' gentle a man as ye are like to find, an' his good works are multifarious."

Well, I drive on down to the big white house an' I ring the bell, wonderin' what I shall find. A tall, gray-headed man in a frock coat comes to the door, but I am not fooled, for by the marks on the face of him I know that it is Paddy Drogheda. He looks at me for a minute an' then his eyes light up.

"It is Recruit O'Hare," he says. "It is a sight for sore eyes that ye are!"

As ye can guess, we have much to talk about. I tell him about the old outfit an' about me goings up an' down since that day when I left him in the hospital in Zamboango. His eyes twinkle a little when I speak of that day.

"It was then that ye would have been throwin' Martin Fenn out into the street by the slack of the pants of him," he says.

"I would that," I told him.

" 'Tis a good friend to me that Martin Fenn has been," Paddy says thoughtful. "He had been lookin' for me to tell me that Jack Lait had not died an' that Molly was still waitin' for me."

Presently a little lady comes into the room, an' I know, sudden, that great happiness has finally come to Paddy Drogheda.

"Molly," says Paddy Drogheda, "this is Recruit O'Hare, of whom I have told ye upon occasion. We were just after goin' to the cellar to look at the taties in the bin."

Molly Drogheda smiles at me, an' I know that there is much that I have missed in life. She shakes her finger playful at him.

"You an' the home brew of ye, Terence Drogheda! The devil will get you yet!"

I can see that she means none of it as Paddy Drogheda takes my arm an' leads me through a door. Down in the cellar he takes two bottles an' opens them an' pours so that the foam boils up in a white cap. He hands one to me an' lifts his own, an' as he looks at me, I can see that the trouble no longer sits at the back of his eyes.

"To the horns on the head of ye, Recruit O'Hare," he says. "May they never come loose."

"Your move, cowman!"

A Cowman Never Quits

By CHARLES W. TYLER

SHORTY LANG reined in the team on the rim of the hog-back and stared dazedly at the desolation before him. The dobe chimney stood like a grim sentry, guarding the still-smoking ruins of the ranchhouse and sheds. He saw, at last, that the horses in the pasture were gone. The wire was down—cut, likely. A white-hot rage kindled in him.

"Damn them!" he cried. "I'm goin' to make somebody pay plenty for this. God knows, it's tough enough to lick the desert without havin' to fight man hell."

He drove on, the wheels talking softly in the ruts, pulling up finally at the gate. A board had been nailed to the upright of the headframe. Chalk letters were printed on it:

Cowman, It's Your Move

Shorty Lang nodded grimly. "Yeah, I reckon it is."

One of the horses whinnied. Lang saw the girl then. She was riding toward him from the screen of chaparral by the spring. She wore Levis, cowboy boots and some sort of fancy plaid waist.

Her beauty did not impress Shorty Lang then, as it did later, but he noted her bare, shapely arms, showing the dull red of sunburn under a thin crust of tan, saw that her hair had a way of tossing rebellious strands becomingly about her face and arrived vaguely at the conclusion that she was no more than twenty.

"Hullo!" she greeted him. "This your place?"

"Howdy, ma'm. It was."

"It's too bad. How do you suppose it ever started?"

"It was set." The cowboy indicated the sign.

The girl stared at it; then she shrugged. "It won't take much to build again. It was just a shack and some sheds."

"Mebbe it didn't look much to you," Lang said angrily, "but it was my home. All my thirty years' gatherin's was there." Suddenly he stared at her narrowly. "How'd you know what was here?"

"I was by here hours ago." She spread her hands in a small gesture of surrender. "You see, I'm lost."

"Didn't yuh cross wagon ruts yonder some place."

"Yes."

"Why didn't yuh foller them? They'd took yuh to Benton."

"Don't be ridiculous," the girl said impatiently. "I did follow them. They brought me back here."

Shorty Lang's lids suddenly pinched over a pair of hot coals. His glance hit hard at the girl; then slid down to the brand on the shoulder of the horse.

"Say, ain't yore name Corbett?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Yuh look like Will Corbett, an' that there C-Bar brand is his."

"You know my uncle then?"

Shorty Lang laughed bitterly. "I know him all right. It was his crowd that set this fire. Just like it was some of 'em that killed Jim Lundell."

The girl gasped. "You—you—don't you dare say such things."

"I'll say 'em an' plenty more," Lang barked. "Will Corbett figgers him an' God A'Mighty is roddin' the only two spreads on earth."

"I don't know who you are, and I don't want to," the girl stormed, "but if I was a man I'd punch you on the nose."

"Lang is the name, ma'am." He made a mock bow. "Shorty Lang," glaring at her. "The Rollin' L—if yuh give a damn."

"Oh, so that's who you are. I might have guessed."

"Yeah. An' when yuh get home, you tell them lousy kiotes that the next time they try to smoke me out they better use gunpowder."

"Oh, I'll do that!" cried the girl with a toss of her head. "Don't worry." She bit her lip suddenly to keep it from quivering. "If I ever can find my way back there."

LANG began unharnessing the team, while his visitor watched with eyes that were wells of desperation. Kay Corbett said, when it appeared that she was going to receive no further attention from the cowboy, "I—I'll make it more than worth your while to drive me to Benton."

"Got a horse, ain't yuh?" Lang was throwing the harness onto the wagon tongue. "All yuh got to do is foller the road."

Funeral shades of purple were splashing the naked peaks. Night was already stalking soft-footed from the canyons. For the first time in her sheltered life Kay Corbett knew the feeling of absolute futility. The desert always made her feel so small.

The terrible emptiness of the world of the Mohave was reaching out—and she was at the mercy of her uncle's bitterest enemy.

Charley Goss, foreman of the C-Bar, had said that this Lang was a plug-ugly, and capable of anything. Her uncle had referred to the Rolling L as a damned poverty spread, stealing water that a real outfit had use for.

Kay Corbett's eyes searched the cowboy's face. He was rolling a cigarette,

apparently unmindful of her presence. His nose had been broken; he had a cauliflower ear and he wore a six-shooter. His skin was like leather. Eyes—flinty, and yet there was something straightforward there.

Warlike as an eagle's, those eyes, Kay Corbett decided, and as free of guile.

The girl said, "I'm half starved."

"All the grub yuh get around here won't fatten yuh none," Lang told her. He was looking at the thin smoke haze that hovered over the place where the buildings had stood.

"You're horrid!" Kay flung out. "I hate and despise you. What rotten luck, to have to get lost on your doorstep."

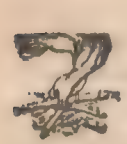
Shod hoofs clicked on the malpai slope. Gus Straw rode toward the wagon, a calf in front of the saddle. There was no expression in the dusty puncher's washed-out blue eyes. Nothing apparently surprised Gus Straw any more, not even a burned ranchhouse or a beautiful stranger.

"Well, I see they done it," he said. He dismounted and cradled the calf to the ground. It blatted weakly, propped on spindling legs. Its eyes were big in its white face. Loose hide hung slack over its skeleton frame.

The girl looked at it pityingly. "The poor little thing. What happened to its mother?"

"This little dogie is an orphant," Gus Straw said. "Its mammy give the last of her strength a-feedin' it, an' then lay down an' died."

Kay Corbett's eyes widened. "Oh." She was remembering now other dead cattle she had seen that day, many of them.



SHORTY LANG built a fire and brought water from the spring. Gus Straw salvaged a coffee pot and skillet from the ruins. The girl watched, strange emotions beating within. They had unsaddled her horse and put it in the corral.

The meal was eaten in silence, with small wicks of flame giving thin light to their faces. Fry-pan bread wasn't so bad, Kay decided, when you were famished. The coffee was strong, scalding hot.

Lang and Gus Straw rolled cigarettes. The night winds whispered out of the mountains like air in a drafty flue. It fanned burned odors from the ashes of the house and sheds.

"Moon will be up in an hour," Lang said at last. "We got to go look for them horses, Gus. They're liable to drift clear to Owls' Holes."

"Saw some cows with calves t'other side of Black Mountain," Gus said. "Up on the bench. Too rough for the wagon. We gotta tote the dogies out a-hossback. Some of them cows ain't ever goin' to make it."

"How's Prospector Well?"

"Low. Say, somebody cut the wire around Bad Water Spring. Four-five dead critters there."

Out of the stillness that crowded down, Kay Corbett at last spoke in a small contrite voice. "What are thirty years' gatherings, Mr. Lang?"

"Reckon yuh ain't been on a ranch much."

"No. We live in Los Angeles. I just come out to the ranch when I get bored with the city."

"Thirty years' gatherin's," Lang said, "is a cowpoke's belongin's. His soogans an' war bag. There's likely to be buckskin strips, latigo leather, tobacco an' papers. Mebbe he's got some old letters an' keepsakes; likely a picture or two—things a hombre likes to sorta visit with when he's alone."

"I'm sorry about the fire," the girl said. "Really, I am, but I'm sure my uncle didn't have anything to do with it."

Shorty brought two blankets from the wagon, all the blankets there were.

"Roll up in 'em when yuh get sleepy," he told the girl. He hesitated. "Mind if I borrer yore saddle a bit? We got a job of huntin' our remuda."

"Why, of course—take it."

The creak of leather spoke of the lacing on of gear. After a little two silhouettes moved across the rim and the hoofbeats whispered away.

Kay Corbett sat staring into the dying embers, her eyes thoughtful. She aroused at last to the hysterical laughter of coyotes. The sound was very close. She remembered the calf, and got

up and went to the corral, with its interwoven sticks through the wire.

The girl was suddenly afraid—afraid for herself, but more afraid for the wobbly-legged dogie.

"The poor motherless little thing," she murmured, "if those coyotes get you it will be over my chewed body."

Shorty Lang found her there when they came back with the horses—curled up asleep by the corral gate, a stout stick beside her.

Dawn was close when Lang awoke Kay. Coffee lent its fragrance to the clean air of the desert. Breakfast was quickly over, and Gus began hitching up the team.

Lang said, "I'll saddle yore horse, ma'm."

"Is he going to Benton?" the girl asked, nodding at Gus.

"Nope, I am," Lang said shortly. "I got to get new gear an' supplies."

"I'm going to ride with you," Kay declared. "I'd only get lost again. We can lead my horse."

"Suit yoreself, but it's a hell of a hard road with a wagon."

"I'm beginning to think that any road is a hard road out here," the girl answered him.

TWO crooked ruts took them past the Wagon Train range. They crossed the dead black beds of a lava flow and wound through sandy hills. Once a mountain sheep stood looking down at them from a craggy mountain shoulder.

"Ain't been any rain goin' on two years," Lang said. "The Big Horns are havin' a tough time like the rest of us. Been findin' quite a few dead ones."

"God doesn't always take very good care of His own, does he?" Kay said.

"Mebbe some look at it that-away. But folks that live in the desert don't find fault none with the Trail Boss in the Sky."

Dust rolled ahead of the plodding team, and they moved on across the flats to come into Benton. Lang's eye hit along the street, and turned baleful at sight of Will Corbett and Charley Goss, standing by the stable yard.

Coots Conway, the barnman, suddenly lifted his squeaky voice. "Jumpin' Joodast! There's Shorty Lang an' the Corbett gal."

Will Corbett hurried to meet the team. "Kay! My God, where have you been? We've had riders combing the desert all night and today. Nobody has slept a wink, and your aunt's sick with worry."

"I'm frightfully sorry," the girl said, "but I was all right. I did get lost. I spent the night at Mr. Lang's ranch. You know Mr. Lang, don't you, Uncle Will?"

"Know him?" the cowman boomed. "Hell, yes. So you were at the Rollin' L."

"Mr. Lang and Gus Straw even gave up their soo—their bed."

"Souls of hospitality," sneered Charley Goss. "Give up their bed, did they? That's a good one." His eye held a peculiar glitter.

The girl held out her hand.

"I want to thank you," she said. "For your kindness, for my supper and breakfast. I was terribly hungry last night."

"Yo're plumb welcome, Miss."

"Good-by—Shorty."

LANG went into Jack Skinner's store, listing in his mind the things he was going to need. His money was gone. The small cache of bills that had been hidden in the house were in ashes.

He'd have to have a saddle, and there was soap, salt, beans, bacon, sorghum. But his credit had always been good. He spoke a word of greeting with Jake and told what had happened.

"Got to start from scratch now."

Jake's eyes narrowed a little. "M-m."

Yes, and there were ropes, a couple pair of Levis, chaps, blankets, a tarp. "I'll have to ask yuh to carry me, Jake."

Jake frowned, pursed his lips. "Thirty days is the best I kin do, Lang."

Shorty Lang felt a sudden emptiness at the pit of his stomach. It was a fact that Corbett had an interest in the store—the C-Bar had their finger in everything where there was a dollar.

"Hell, I can't pay yuh in thirty days, Jake. Now this fall I'll have a few feeders to sell—"

Jake Skinner rolled out his under lip and shook his head slowly. "Takes money to run a store. Don't figger to git loaded with no bum accounts. Mebbe ye won't have no cattle come fall. Hear stock is dyin' like flies."

Lang's shoulders had a droop when he stumped out of the store. His eye caught the sign over the door of the bank across the street. He could try Alvin Presley. About a year ago the banker had offered to let him have money to put down a well and build a pipe line. But things were different now than they had been a year ago. Nobody knew then that there would be a season without rain, and the Rolling L had buildings, fat saddle stock and a herd.

But now a drought year was here. There would be yucca blossoms and roots and cresote bush for a time. Gramma, wild millet, filaree—such graze was gone, done for.

Alvin Presley was a Vermont Yankee. Men said he was as tight as wet rawhide and as honest as the noonday sun. He greeted Lang with a sour grimace that could hardly have been called a smile.

Lang told of the fire and explained that he was strapped. He didn't even have a second shirt to his name. He didn't need much, but he'd *got* to have help.

Presley said, "Humph!" He glared at the young cowman as though he was not only to blame for his own plight but for the drought. "How much ye want?"

"Five hundred," the cowboy said.

"Be just like loanin' a panhandler a dime," Presley said with his nasal twang. "Money'd be spent; then where would ye be? Where would I be?"

Shorty Lang's face turned crimson; his fingers clenched. He wanted to tell old Presley where he could go.

"I'll tell ye where ye'd be—broke, just like ye are now. All ye'll have next fall will be a few balls of hair. Time ye paid me, there wouldn't be enough to run ye a month. Ye'd be lookin' for money for wages, money to build, money here, money there." Alvin Presley waved his hand as though to ward off some offensive attacking insect. "Ye ain't any kind of a risk, not even a poor one. Could let ye have five dollars out of my pocket—"

"Go to hell, yuh damned old Vermont buzzard!" Lang cried, unable to contain himself longer. "I ain't askin' for a sermon or charity."

"Why don't ye sell to Corbett?"

"For a plugged nickel I'd take a poke at yuh!" Lang shouted. "You an' Skinner likely are in with the C-Bar." He slammed out.

Coots Conway and the hostler were preparing to harness a span of horses to a buggy. Shorty Lang strode into the feed yard. He'd got to pick up a saddle somewhere.

"Corbett and his niece are drivin' home," Coots volunteered, chuckling. "Reckon that purty leetle gal done got all the saddle spankin' she wants fer a long time. Heh! Say, heerd ye had a fire, Shorty."

"Burnt me right to the ground," Lang said savagely. "Not only that, they're tryin' to run me out. I bought Lundell's place fair an' square because I saw a good chance at the last open range there is, here in the Mohave. But the C-Bar want that water an' they're givin' me hell. I ain't got no proof, or I'd make 'em burn powder."

"Too bad, Shorty. Yuh know, I hoped ye was goin' to make a go of it."

"Say, Coots, I got to get me a saddle some place. Gus is out there, ridin' from hell to breakfast. He's all alone. Skinner won't trust me an' Presley turned me down. Tell yuh, I'll swap yuh one of my team horses for some gear."

Coots Conway, long-jawed, homely, shook his head. "Nope." He wiped a drizzle of Five Brothers eating tobacco from his chin. "Kain't use neither of 'em."

Lang's eyes clouded. Coots was his last hope.

Conway's beady little eyes were watching him. "Got a saddle hoss in yore remuda ye kin spare, a gentle one?"

"Sure. Got more broncs than there's goin' to be feed for."

"That's what I figured. Swap yuh

out of one fer a saddle 'n' bridle. Throw in a blanket an' a couple ropes." The barman cocked his head and eyed Lang shrewdly. "Yup. Old pair of bull-hide chaps hangin' up in the gear room. Take 'em along."

Shorty Lang's face lighted. He stuck out his hand. "Thanks, Coots."

"Socked yuh below the belt, I reckon. Know how ye feel."

"I took a lot of lickin's in my day. This looks like the worst one. If I drug out of this it will be a miracle."

"What you need is a drink," Coots said. He turned to the hostler. "When ye get done hitchin' up, taken the bridles off Shorty's hosses an' give 'em some oats."

WILL CORBETT and Charley Goss were standing at the bar when Lang and the stableman pushed through the door from the alley. Their eyes immediately fixed alertly on the Rolling L man.

Lang returned their stare. He had murder in his heart. Goss stood with his elbow on the bar, and Lang's glance revealed a shoulder harness and black gun-butt. Charley Goss, he knew, was smooth as a shadow and as hard as a wolf's tooth.

Will Corbett was the power, but Goss was the hard-driving fighting unit of the spread. He had gathered hard men around him, gun-handed men like Dan Allred and Joe Mauzey.

As Lang and Coots Conway breasted up to the bar, Will Corbett moved over to join them. Goss remained a little apart. The Rolling-L man let his eye skirmish along the mirror. He saw Allred and Mauzey at one of the gambling tables. Occasionally they flicked a glance toward the bar.

"The drinks are on me, Lang," Corbett said. "Kay tells me you put yourself out to make her comfortable."

"Mister, yuh don't buy hospitality with a drink." Lang retorted. "I'd done the same for any saddle bum."

"Oh, so that's the way you feel?" Corbett's voice grew hard.

Shorty Lang's eye held to Corbett's vein-marked face. "Did the girl give yuh my message?"

"Why, no. She didn't say yuh had any word."

"I told her to tell yuh the next time yuh tried to smoke me out that yuh better use gunpowder."

Goss spoke now. His tone held a snarled threat. "Send yore messages by a woman, eh?"

"I ain't sendin' no word that I'm afraid to deliver in person."

Goss smiled crookedly, a mirthless flicker of face muscles. "Yuh ain't threatenin' anybody, are yuh, Lang?"

"I never threatened a man in my life," Shorty Lang said slowly. "I tell him my little piece, an' if he wants to make somethin' out of it, I'll try an' accommodate 'im."

It was at that moment that Hank Dance came through the street door. He was a stolid, barrel-chested man. A marshal's star was caught loosely on his shirt.

He caught the glance that Charley Goss shot at him, as he advanced toward the bar.

The marshal's eye fixed to Shorty Lang with a flinty fixedness of purpose. A sudden stillness fell that left in the room only the measured clump of Hank Dance's boot-heels. His hand rested on Lang's shoulder.

"Mind checkin' that six-shooter with the bartender?"

"I'm gettin' out of town as soon as my horses eat," Lang said.

"To hell with yore hosses! Take off that Colt-gun."

"I'll take it off when Charley Goss shucks the cutter he's luggin' under his arm," Lang answered.

"I ain't talkin' to Goss."

Coots Conway said, "What the hell's the matter with yuh, Hank? Everybody has always wore their irons."

"Shut up, Coots!"

Dance slid his fingers down a little and their grip tightened on Lang's left arm. "Yuh goin' to do like I say, or are we goin' over to the calaboose?"

Shorty Lang straightened from the bar, turning a little, as a white-hot flame set his brain afire. This would be the work of Corbett or Goss, one or the other. They knew he had a hair-trigger temper; that he'd been in the ring at

different times, getting a few hard-earned dollars at the expense of getting his block knocked off. That money had gone into the starved little spread yonder.

Corbett and Goss knew that right now the Rolling L was punch-drunk. There wasn't any doubt but that they were aware of his efforts to buy on credit at the store and of his futile visit to the bank.

All they'd got to do now was pin his ears back here in Benton—find an excuse to throw him in the jug. He'd fight like a cornered rat; they knew that. The odds were all against him. Gus would be left out there with the coyotes and the buzzards, just one lone puncher.

No graze, no water, no grub. The cattle licking mud at springs and water holes gone dry, and dying of anthrax. The range burning up and blowing away, along with the dead ashes of the ranch buildings.

Shorty Lang hit Hank Dance, crossing his right, fast as light. Bony knuckles, tough as an oak knot, and driven by the maddest cowboy that had ever started a fight. The marshal spun half around and went down, but in a moment he was up and clawing for his gun.

Dance had the six-shooter half clear when Lang's fingers seized his wrist. The Rolling L man wrenched the weapon away and hurled it through a window.

Dan Allred and Joe Mauzey were on their feet, but they seemed to be waiting for a signal from Goss. More, the marshal was between them and Lang.

Goss made a half move with his gun hand and hesitated. Lang, he saw, was waiting, the bright heat of his eyes giving warning of a spark and powder half a heart-beat apart.

"Now—or any time, Goss!" Lang said in a hard, flat tone.

A huge oath stormed out of Will Corbett. He'd meant to have a quiet word with Lang before there was bloodshed. He had an offer in mind, a fair enough offer, he thought—and all of a sudden here was hell slopping brimstone on his doorstep.

"Stop it!" he roared. "Hell'n'damnation, what is this?"

Coots Conway rolled his eyes and set in motion a long, skinny pair of bowed legs. "Jeepin' Christopher," he cried squeakily. And banged swiftly out the alley door.

Charley Goss drew in a slow breath, as the tension in him eased off. His eyes were murderous. Two paces, and a belt-hung gun against a shoulder draw.

His tongue tipped his lips, moistening their dryness.

"Later," he said softly.

SHORTY LANG backed toward the door. A moment later he was hurrying across to the livery barn.

Hank Dance stood for a little, fingers feeling of his jaw. He was aware vaguely of the voice of Corbett, commanding that Lang not be crowded. Time enough to thresh it out when tempers had cooled.

Lang cast an eye at his team. The gaunt animals were slobbering joyfully over their first oats in months, bridles hooked on hames. Not much chance to get away. He'd have the whole crowd on his neck in a few minutes.

Tight-lipped, his glance went back the way he'd come. He stood there uncertainly, breathing hard. He half hoped they'd come after him. This was as good a place as any to finish it, right here in the stable yard. "Cowboy, it's your move." That was the mark they'd given him to shoot at. Well, he'd show them.

He heard Coots Conway's voice in the corral out back.

"Whoa, yuh blank, blank, misbehaved jughead! Excuse me, ma'am. That's right, blow yore belly full of wind, yuh evil-minded old hellion. I'm shore sorry, lady."

Lang went that way. Rounding the corner he heeled to an abrupt stop. The barnman was lacing a saddle on a rangy claybank gelding. Kay Corbett was lending assistance. She saw him then.

"Oh, you fool!" she cried, her eyes blazing. "I didn't think you were that sort of a quitter."

"Quitter?" Lang said thickly.

"Just a hot-headed, fighting fool!" the girl lashed at him. "And I made the

mistake of thinking you were a cowman. What will happen to Gus Straw and those starved dogies, looking big-eyed at their dead mothers, if you get into trouble? You're just a pug." Her eyes were blazing. "Don't you know that Dance and Charley Goss are like that?"

"I can run my business!" Lang snarled. "I don't have to take that sort of talk from your kind."

"Shut up! The next thing, you'll be trying to slap me down, I suppose."

A half dozen punchers had come boisterously into the stable yard out front. Kay glanced through a grimed pane and saw them framed by the open door beyond.

"C-Bar riders," she announced.

Coots Conway said. "My, my, poppin' off to a lady that-away. Come here, yuh busted-nosed ranny. Fork this cayuse an' .fog fer home."

"What about the team?" Lang demanded.

"I'll look arter 'em," Coots said over his shoulder, as he angled away to open the gate.

The girl held out the reins. Shorty Lang glared at her. "All right, we're even. But yuh better keep out of the desert until yuh grow up."

"Is that so?" Kay retorted. "Well, you'd better stay out of Benton if you don't want an undertaker combing your hair."

Lang snatched the reins from her and piled into the saddle. For thirty miles he rode the harsh way of the penitent. The Mohave moon wheeled up past the desert rim to wash the wasteland. Sight of it stirred strange reflections in the young cowman's heart. He couldn't shake loose from thoughts of Kay Corbett.

He found remorse tearing at him. The girl had been right, and knowing how right she'd been in hurrying him out of Benton only added to his misery. For he had no doubt but that it was Kay who, upon learning of what had happened in the saloon, had ordered the horse saddled.

Hank Dance was a cold, unforgiving man. Sooner or later he'd take his measure of flesh. It was another nail for the C-Bar to hammer home in his coffin. And Goss—every one in the saloon had heard the threat flung. If he, Shorty Lang, killed the boss of the C-Bar, it would go against him. On the other hand, if he was gunned down, Goss would parry with a plea of self defense.

Lang reined in on the hogback. It was hard not to see the shapes of the ranch buildings nestling below him. Again there was emptiness in him at thought of the things that were forever lost. He could make out a few cattle in the picket-woven corral. He'd sort of figured on bringing back a load of baled bean straw, which would help in feeding the fresh cows, while they were held for the calves to suck.

A horse nickered. The voice of Gus Straw drawled out from a pool of shadow. "Mister, yo're a hell of a purty shot, skylined that-away."

Lang hastened to identify himself. Gus wouldn't be looking for him to be horsebacking home at all. They hunkered down beside the calf corral, low-voiced, cigarettes glowing.

"We'll be smokin' sagebrush in a little bit," Shorty said.

They were saddling before dawn, their bellies stoked scantly with coffee and fry-pan bread.

"Git to sample town chuck?" Gus asked.

"No. I was right took up with high finance. Coots Conway done buy me a drink. Guess it's still a-settin' there on the bar."

They loaded two pack animals with wire, cottonseed and coffee and flour.

"Yuh take the inside circle," Lang told Gus. I'll swing the big ride. No good tryin' to tote calves back here without the wagon. I can fix a small c'ral at Prospector Well."

"The ax an' shovel is right compact," Gus said. "The handles burnt out of 'em. I mind there's some pieces of two by twice near the headframe at Prospector Well. Mebbe yuh kin whittle some."

Shorty threw a squaw hitch apiece, using the two ropes that he had found tied to the saddle horn back there at Benton, and spoke a final word with Gus.

It was amazing, the places a cow

would go to drop her calf. There was work for half a dozen punchers. Shorty Lang's days, it seemed, were spent riding either straight up or straight down. Evenings he worked at building a crude corral by light of a mesquite root fire. And all of the time faced by the thought that it was a losing fight. He was destitute; there wasn't even an animal with enough meat on its bones to peddle to a slaughterhouse.

One day he dug out Piute Springs; then watched with troubled eyes how slowly it filled. The scant dried grass and shrubs of the desert graze were only available within the radius that a cow could forage and still get water.

Hell-hot summer months were ahead; and how long then before the rains might come, God only knew.

SHORTY LANG had been working out of Prospector Well a week when one day he saw the dust flag signaling the approach of a rider on the flats. He started back to camp. Several times he'd glimpsed distant horsemen. He was certain that they were C-Bar men.

The rider was Kay Corbett. She had a pack horse in tow. Her eyes were surveying the forlorn camp, the shaky-legged calves in the corral, the two ribby broncs, nosing bits of wind-blown grass from under cactus.

Lang was too surprised at seeing the girl to be even civil. "Oh, so it's you again. Lost?"

"What a riotous welcome," the girl said. "I'm at a loss for words, like the mule-skinner told the leaders. A fine way to greet a neighbor dropping in to say 'howdy'."

"I'm sorry, ma'm. Startin' on a trip?" eyeing the pack animal. "I see yuh got one of my broncs."

"Don't worry, I didn't steal your old horse," the girl retorted. "And I'm not starting on a trip."

"Yuh sure wouldn't be comin' way out here to see me."

"Listen, Sir Galahad," Kay cried in exasperation. "It so happens that you *do* have a few friends left. I don't know how you do it with that disposition. But it's like this:

"Old Ballarat Bill was in Benton, trying to wheedle a grubstake out of Jake Skinner. Jake said no; he had an interest in half of the undiscovered mines in the Mohave already. Coots Conway bargained with old Bill to drive your team home."

"Coots did?"

"Well, Coots and I. You know, I always did want to grubstake a prospector. Ballarat, it seems, was going out your way, so we loaded the supplies on the wagon."

"Say, what's on that pack horse?" Shorty demanded suddenly.

"Oh, beans and bacon, soogans, a little canned stuff and the like."

Lang stared at the girl, and a slow grin broke through the grimed stubble of his face. "I take it all back, bein' rude that-away. Light down. Yuh know, I been gettin' doggone tired of fry-pan biscuits."

He removed the pack and watered the horses. The two of them squatted in the dust then, while Kay watched the cowboy examining the sacked treasures with keen enjoyment.

She spoke at last of matters that remained darkly in her mind.

"You are terribly bitter, aren't you?" she said. "You hate the C-Bar."

"I got reason," Lang answered. "Yuh see, a man named Jim Lundell owned the ranch before me, an' a whiter man never lived. The C-Bar wanted the place on account of the springs an' the water that's underground. They gunned Jim down. An' when I come, they started on me, an' they been at it ever since."

The girl was silent a long time; then she stole a glance at Lang.

"Charley Goss wants me to marry him," she said.

"Well, why don't yuh?" Lang did not look at her. He was building a miniature house of twigs.

"Because I don't love him." Another long silence. Then: "Say, are you going to keep on fighting the C-Bar?"

"A cowman never quits," the other said slowly.

"One of you will have to some time," Kay reminded Lang.

"It will be finished with guns, I reckon."

"The easy way would be to sell," the girl said.

"Say, I bet that's what yuh come for!" Lang flared angrily. "They told yuh to feel me out. I figured somethin' like that."

"That's right, fly off the handle, you hammer-head!" Kay cried. "I never saw such a hair-trigger ranny."

"Aw, I'm sorry," the cowman muttered contritely. "I can't make yuh out, that's all."

"Look! Just what would a woman have to do to make you understand?"

A number of horsemen rounded the jutting crags of Needle Rock. The hoofs of their mounts flowed softly in the drifted sand. The girl stared past Lang with wide-eyed alarm. He caught the direction of her gaze and spun to his feet.

Charley Goss and three riders were coming toward Prospector Well. Lang recognized Dan Allred and Joe Mauzey. He did not know the shifty-eyed man.

THE bleak eye of Goss swept the camp. He was plainly surprised at sight of the girl, and furiously angry.

"What the hell are you doin' here, Kay?" he demanded.

The girl had arisen. She stood straight, defiant, her eyes aflame. "Listen, Charley Goss, I'm free, white and twenty-one my next birthday, and I don't have to answer to you for anything I do; remember that."

A cruel twist came to the foreman's mouth. "Yuh gone sweet on Lang, that's what. Well, it's all right by me. But I want to tell yuh somethin'—have yore little affair out here in the brush an' have it over with, because this hombre is headin' for big trouble."

Lang said, "Goss, if yuh will climb off that horse, I'll punch them remarks down yore throat."

The C-Bar man shook his head slowly. "I ain't tradin' punches with a busted-up fighter, yuh damn fool. When you an' me finish it will be with guns." He turned to the others. "Come on."

Kay stared after the sifting dust cloud. Her eyes filled.

"The beast!" she cried.

Shorty Lang suddenly wanted to take her in his arms, and he did—and kissed her. And as quickly released her. The girl looked at him. She seemed neither surprised nor angry.

"I didn't think you had it in you," she said.

After a little she went on, her eyes big, serious. "I want you to believe something, Shorty Lang. They call Will Corbett a cattle king, a tycoon, a devil. He'll fight for what he wants from the drop of the hat. He always said it was a shame the Rolling L home place couldn't be developed because it would be valuable, if it had some wells put down. It did make him mad to lose out, but he didn't know anything about setting that fire.

"When we went into the hotel in Benton that day, I made some remark about the ranchhouse, and Charley Goss spoke right up. 'You mean what's left of it,' he said. Then the funniest look came over his face, for no one in town could have known about the fire then. Uncle Will said, 'What do you mean?' But Charley passed it off in some way."

"All right, I believe yuh," Lang said. "But I never liked Will Corbett; he was always lookin' to make a grab. He's yore uncle, so I won't call him no names that yuh can't repeat to him—but if that pot-bellied old terrier thinks he's goin' to buy me out, he's crazy."

A short time later the girl rode away.

Lang did not build a fire that night, fearing an attack. He slept with his Winchester beside him among the rocks a short distance from the well.

Two days later Gus arrived with the wagon.

"I'd been here sooner," he told Shorty, after they had called each other affectionate epithets, "but I had to wait for Ballarat Bill to git back."

"Get back from where?" Lang demanded. "An' say—what's that on the wagon?"

"Bean straw," Gus said. "Yuh see, Ballarat hauled out another load from town."

"Who told old Ballarat to haul bean straw? An' who's puttin' up for it, anyhow?"

"I dunno," Gus said. "It's complicated

as hell. Bill allows that girl told him she'd sell her half in the grub stake if he'd turn to an' do a little freightin'. When she come by on her way back from here that day, she said to fetch along some bean straw, because these pore little dogies, she says, ought to be suckin' their mamas, an' their mamas had got to have suthin' in their bellies to make milk with."

Shorty Lang was silent.

"Kinda looks like we was a-gettin' grubstaked," Gus suggested, rolling a droll eye under his hat brim.

"The grubstake law," Lang said slowly, "is that the one that put up for it gets half. Share an' share alike."

"Y'know," Gus mused, "that girl is a smart one."

"She's a Corbett," Lang said.

"Ole Ballarat thinks she's grand," Gus went on. "Her an' him are goin' lookin' for the lost Dutch Oven mine next fall."

That night, from high up among the tumbled boulders on the ridge back of Prospector Well, a rifle cracked. Followed a fusillade of shots, to which Gus and Shorty replied, nursing their scant supply of cartridges.

Several cows were killed and a horse. Then again the desert silence spread its shroud.

"There's got to be a showdown," Lang declared. "Things can't go on like this."

In the days that followed there were long hours in the saddle tracking stray cattle, and more and more often there were cows dead of starvation and thirst where the tracks ended. Hot winds blasted the nights. The heat of the days might have been from the furnace doors of hell. The earth swam in a sea of heat devils, while mirages spun their false tapestries of water and trees.

Twice more night riders fired on Rolling L camps.

Lang had not seen Kay since that day at Prospector Well, but the memory of her was like something soft and lovely and sacred.

IT WAS late when Lang rode into Benton that Saturday night. At the end of the street, he reined in, studying the pattern before him.

A smear of buildings was there, checkered by squares of light. Yellow mats lay on sidewalks and under board awnings. Horses slouched loose-hipped at hitch-rails.

Lang rode on, sitting stiffly erect, his eye alert. His eye slid past the sightless windows of the bank, and he visualized the pinch-penny face of Alvin Presley, looking at him as though he were a counterfeit dollar.

Toad-like figures were hunkered in front of Skinner's store. Jake stood in the doorway in his shirt sleeves, mopping his face, for the day's heat still clung to the town.

Lang saw Hank Dance then. The marshal was crossing from the telegraph office to the store. One of the loungers spoke in a guarded tone. "Ain't that Shorty Lang?"

The murmur of voices was suddenly hushed. Lang felt the press of eyes on him. When he had passed, the quickening pulse of conversation followed in his wake.

A tin-pan piano begged the occupants of a saloon to feed the kitty. Somewhere drunken voices argued monotonously. A whiskey tenor struggled with, "Where is My Wandering Boy?"

As he passed, Lang's eye was drawn to the light in an upstairs window at the hotel. A woman was looking into the street. Shorty Lang felt his heart quicken until he was filled with a slugging ache. He dipped his head suddenly, giving his face into the shadow of his sombrero, for the woman was Kay Corbett.

It didn't strike him as strange that she should be here. Their paths seemed destined to cross. He regretted, however, that she should be in Benton tonight. He'd never thought that the mere sight of a woman could so fill him with crazy wishes.

Yet here he was, just one jump ahead of drought, starvation and hot lead—and he wanted Kay Corbett more than he had ever wanted anything else in the world. It was like reaching for the moon.

He rode on to the feed yard. The night man came from the barn and hailed him. A smoky lantern hung by a door, and Lang saw the other's sharpening in-

terest. He flipped the reins through a ring and went toward the saloon.

He freed his six-shooter of the safety strap and loosened it a little of the tight grip of leather. Across the street he marked the slow tunk of boot heels, and was aware that the sound of them had suddenly ceased.

His eye picked up the shadow of a man, standing against the blackness of an alley. A little tingling was set in motion along his spine, but he shrugged it off and entered the saloon.

Lang stood for a moment just inside the door, while his glance hit fast through the lazy veils of smoke. He moved on then to the bar, seeing Will Corbett and half a dozen C-Bar punchers bellied up to the mahogany. Charley Goss was not there, and Lang's brain turned briefly to that shadowy figure standing across the street.

"Neighbor," Lang told the barman, "I figger I got a drink comin'."

"How so, Shorty?"

"I left it a-sittin' right here a month ago."

Will Corbett's eye watched him curiously, seeming to be measuring the temper of the Rolling L man. He spoke now. "Lang, a month ago I asked you to have a drink on the C-Bar. The invitation still holds."

Lang's head signaled a curt negative. "Yuh might as well know it, Corbett—I'm lookin' for Charley Goss."

"Reckon he's in town."

Lang's eye traveled down the bronzed row of curious faces, brazenly watching him. His glance had a deadly spark.

"Somebody's been throwin' lead around our ears out in the desert," the Rolling L man intoned. "I come to town to give anybody that wants a chance to throw some at six-gun range."

"That's your affair, not mine," Corbett said. "Let me say this—Charley Goss is a bad man to monkey with."

The barman said, "Yore drink, Shorty. An' one on the house comin' up. Yo're liable to need 'em."

A puncher came through the door. It was the shifty-eyed man who had been with Goss at Prospector Well. Lang's glance seized on him and held.

The slit-eyed man's lip curled in a leer. "Somebody outside wants to see yuh, Lang." He half turned.

Lang said, "Just a minute." He moved forward, slow-footed. "Tell Goss I'll be right out." His voice raised to carry to ears that might be listening beyond.

The shifty-eyed man grinned, was still grinning when Lang crashed home two hard blows, a left and a right. The punches set the other to groping groggily on hands and knees. The Rolling L man turned swiftly toward the side door. He went into the darkness between saloon and stable and cat-footed toward the sidewalk.

Charley Goss was standing hard against the wall, facing toward the saloon's bat-wing doors, hand on six-shooter butt.

"Yore move, cowman!" Lang's voice lifted a little the weight of silence that lay on the street.

Goss whirled, throwing up his gun. Two roaring reports slammed the night. Muzzle flame licked out hungrily against the background of velvet shadow. In that moment of breathless stillness which followed there was the muffled sound of a body falling to the plank.

The click of city shoes hit sharply along the sidewalk. Kay Corbett's voice was clear, shrill. "Look out! Dan Allred is across the street."

Lang called to her gruffly. "Get back, Kay!" He flung out past the hitch-rack that she not be caught in the line of fire, and a bullet gouged splinters wickedly from the corner where he had been standing.

Lang's .45 replied to the flash with booming detonation. Came then a throaty cry and the clatter of a man stumbling.

Hank Dance approached warily. Benton street was filled with a hysterical babble.

Kay's voice reached above it all. "Shorty! *Shorty!*"

And Shorty Lang said, "Here, Kay."

"CHARLEY GOSS was done workin' for the C-Bar two weeks ago," Will Corbett said.

Lang stared incredulously at the big

man. They were in the stuffy, lamplit hotel parlor—Corbett, Kay and Shorty Lang.

"Goss an' Dan Allred an' Joe Mauzey," Corbett's voice rumbled on. "I give 'em their time. I learned that Goss figgered to double-cross me on that Jim Lundell deal. Jim was killed, an' it ain't for me to say who shot him.

I know the squint-eyed hombre who come in the saloon after you was a friend of Goss. He was the one that tried to make a quick cash dicker with Lundell's widow almost before Jim was cold. Goss figgered to start up there on his own account."

"If you'd looked up the records," Lang said, "you'd seen it in black an' white that Jim Lundell sold out to me two years before I took over. He was to stay an' run his own iron until I got me a stake punchin' cattle an' fightin' in between."

"Lundell an' his wife was too damned close-mouthed," Corbett growled. "They never let on, just said they wa'n't interested in no offers."

"Seems as though a Corbett has a finger in the pie anyway." Kay's voice had a quality that gave freshness to the musty parlor. "I'm smarter than you, Uncle Will. I grubstaked the Rolling L, and old Ballarat Bill says I'm a fool if I don't make it stick, like in mining law."

"That goes," Lang told her, "if I lick the drought."

Kay shook her head vigorously, her fingers setting their possessive grip on Shorty Lang's arm. "No! It goes—win, lose or draw."

"I ain't marryin' a meal ticket," the cowman said. "You come of too much money."

"You're wrong as shooting," the girl cried. "This Corbett is broke. *I'm* marrying a meal ticket. I had to borrow the money from Uncle Will that I spent for those supplies and the bean straw I sent out."

"Hell's bells!" shouted Will Corbett, "Was that what you wanted the money for?"

Monday morning Shorty Lang went in to see Alvin Presley.

"I want to borrow ten thousand dollars," the Rolling L man said bluntly. "We're fixin' to put down a well an' run some pipe lines. Got to have a house out there too. I'm getting married right plumb soon."

"Durned if I don't let ye have it," the nasal twang of Presley answered him.

When Shorty Lang came out of the bank, he saw Jake Skinner waving him to the store. He crossed the street and observed that Hank Dance was among the loungers.

The marshal flipped his hand in amiable salute to a top fighting cowman of the Mohave.

"Mornin', Lang. Goin' to be another scorcher."

"Another move like that an' you go into irons!"

HANGING JOHNNY

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

THE *Lapwing* wasn't worth much as she lay in the creek mud; she had outlived her day. But there came a war in the East, and metal was needed. She was built of steel, so speculators loaded her with scrap iron and sent her off to sea to make a swift and swollen profit out of her bones.

John Killick never meant to go to sea, never wanted to. In sunny weather he sometimes thought that sails in the sunset looked pretty, but in rain or wind or sleet he had no use for the waterfront; the thought of being out there under any sort of canvas made him shiver. He was a pallid, skinny youth of

no vices, shy of his more robust fellowmen, happy if only left alone when his day's work was done to play about with bits and pieces of radio.

It was that which provoked Sally to tell him she was done with him. She wanted a live man. So she went off with a soldier and John went back to his gadgets.

But he thought he wanted Sally after all. He went out to try to find her, and failed. Sally was already in a warmer, snugger spot with her soldier, and John felt lost until he encountered a party of uproarious seamen making a night of it before sailing.

They gathered him in, making him welcome, and he spent a thrilling hour listening to tall salt water yarns and daring ditties. He drank with them, and began to feel no end of a man. But drink and he were not on familiar terms; his exaltation passed, and he passed out. When he awoke, he was on board the *Lapwing*, and she was at sea with the Pacific dancing under her. A stout old man with whiskers was shaking him, regarding him with humorous perplexity.

"You missed the bus, me lad. Have to come along an' see the Old Man."

John tumbled out of the bunk and fell into Joe Grundy's arms.

"How did I come here?" he bleated. "This is a ship, isn't it?"

"Pretty good guess, sonny. You passed out last night, and I tucked you in; but I never asked you to stay for the v'yage. Better see the Old Man. He loves stowaways!"

Captain Peters was not in a good humor. He had sailed the *Lapwing* in her palmy days, and now he was taking her out to be turned into scrap. Her spacious decks were cluttered up with huge iron buoys, condemned; a stove-in steel lighter; an ancient Navy steam pinnace, whose funnel was like a sieve; her holds, once the receptacles for fine freights, were crammed with old iron.

He had seen something of his crew for the first time just now, and thought little of them. Now the only seaman in the lot, Joe Grundy, was apologizing for a stowaway.

Captain Peters heard Joe's version, then gazed for a moment at the diminishing dot of the pilot boat almost lost against the fading loom of the land.

"I can lock you up until the police—" he began. John took fright.

"But I haven't done anything, mister! I never wanted to come in your ship. I can work—"

"Work? You don't look to be on speaking terms with it! What can you do? You're no sailor."

"I can work the radio," said John eagerly. John saw the second mate laughing behind the captain's back. The second mate was wiping off the scarred mahogany panels of the charthouse. "I can do that sort of work," declared John, pointing. The wraith of a smile crept into the captain's face.

"Perhaps I won't give you to the police," he said. "Mr. Nolan, put him to work. See he earns his keep. If he doesn't—"

The unspoken words were eloquent.

So John Killick went to sea, and he wished he had gone for a soldier.

HE was not a sailor, and never would be. The work was strange, the men of a type he had only read about. He could never learn to make fast a rope so that it stayed fast, to scramble for his food as the ragtag crew scrambled revolted him. And yet, as he had discovered on that disastrous sailing night, there was something about ships and men of the sea which thrilled him. Then he had joined in salty sea songs with rapturous enthusiasm; now, whenever there was hauling to do and a chanty was sung he sung as loudly as anybody. Mostly the men laughed at him without spite.

"They call me Hanging Johnny, Away —away!

Because I hang for money, so hang, boys, hang!"

He liked that song best of all, swaying his head to it with half shut eyes as he hauled at the tail of a rope. Pepe the Spig, who would have been the butt of the ship for uselessness had not John been aboard, could not sing, and resented the ability in John.

"Pool an' shut up, peeg!" he hissed, digging an elbow into Johnny's skinny ribs. John fell back further along the rope, away from his tormentor, and closed his eyes entirely, the rope loose in his hand, bellowing at the top of his lungs. Pepe stamped on his toes, hurting him, and John in desperation slapped at the man's vicious face. In a flash Pepe had his knife from the sheath —then Mr. Nolan, the second mate, leaped and grabbed him. Mr. Nolan's eyes were laughing, his lips were not.

"That's your sort, eh? Another move like that and you go into irons!" he said angrily. He took Pepe's knife, stuck the point into a hatch cleat and broke the blade off short. Then he tossed the bits overboard.

"You come with me, Hanging Johnny," he told John. "I'll find you a job you can do."

The men grinned at the nickname, and adopted it. And had it not been for the implication that Mr. Nolan thought him useless as a sailor, Hanging Johnny would have felt proud of it.

Helping the dirty cook in the filthy galley was a disgraceful job. Even Pepe the Spig, deprived of his knife and for the moment cowed by Mr. Nolan's warning, found it easy to insult the cook's helper and still keep on the windward side of authority.

Only Joe Grundy remained John's friend, and that was a very comfortable thought, for Joe was the best seaman in the ship, perhaps the only one in the foc'sle. Joe patiently tried to teach him things which might emancipate him from the hated galley. It was hopeless. Hanging Johnny was smart enough in his line, but that was not the line of seamanship. A rope to him was like a piece of string to a woman, and he could make no more of it. His body lacked weight for sailor's work; his fingers, which were almost magically clever with delicate instruments and fine machinery, were thumbs when it came to handling rope or canvas. Even in the galley he was a failure. Never could he get grease off utensils; when he peeled potatoes he lopped the life out of them.

He sat in the decrepit steam launch, scouring a grease-encrusted copper. About the untidy decks men followed Mr. Nolan, doing in their poor fashion jobs which helped to keep the old ship going. Every day there were such jobs, splicing, serving old rigging long past soundness, and Joe Grundy always led in the work.

Hanging Johnny's eyes followed him wistfully. Joe had been very patient with him, but it was no use. Something more than cleverness with machinery and precision instruments went to the making of a sailor. It was Joe who shoved him into the launch with his big copper, out of the way of better men on the encumbered decks where every inch of room counted. The other men had simply walked over him. Mr. Nolan treated him as a human being too, but Mr. Nolan was only second mate and even he could not make a sailor out of Johnny; he had quit trying after a week.

IT WAS very hot as the ship drew into mid-Pacific, and his seat in the launch raised him high enough to catch the breeze. He considered sleeping there at night. He possessed no bed, and his bit of old canvas would be as soft out there as in the evil smelling forecastle. As he wrestled with his copper, despairing of ever getting the grease off, he regarded the littered interior of the launch, hoping to find among the heap of nameless metal refuse something which might be used as a scraper.

He removed a ton of scrap iron before he found a piece of flat brass, and then he sang as he scraped, seeing results for his labor. Once he felt that his work was to some purpose he recovered his spirits. He found himself swaying to the lift and gentle roll of the ship; the patched and stained canvas above him took on new loveliness.

"Wot about that 'ere copper? Takin' yer time, ain' you?" demanded the Doctor, scowling from the galley door at the eager face of his singing, thumb-fingered helper.

"Finished, Doc! Got some more to clean? Gee, you keep your pots dirtier than a sewer rat's boots!"

Mr. Nolan heard, and grinned.

"That's you, Hanging Johnny! Give old Slushy hell. He's liable to poison all hands with his filthy habits," he remarked.

The men heard it. The antagonism between seamen and ships, cooks is as old as the sea. Hanging Johnny rose a step in merit.

When the last pot was scoured bright, and the day's work was done, Johnny crept into the launch again after supper and until dark rummaged through the odds and ends of broken metal. He had asked Mr. Nolan if he might sleep there, and there was no reason why he shouldn't, so he had to clear a space big enough for him to lie down.

The deeper he dug the less he thought of sleep. It was like giving a child a huge box of glittering toys. There were bits of brass and copper steam fittings, brass ventilator cowls, gauges, smashed buckets, broken cylinders, all sorts of odds and ends of small metal pitched into the launch at the last minute in cleaning up the scrap pile back at the loading wharf. When the bottom was reached, the launch's engine room was accessible, and here Johnny felt at home. The grime of ages, the corrosion of neglect covered everything, but still it was machinery, and that was Johnny's meat. He forgot all about sleep. The moon came up, and still he probed into the rusty, dry-rotted bowels of the launch.

Next day he told Mr. Nolan he could clean up the launch so that she might sell for better than scrap price, and Captain Peters agreed that a stowaway ought to be made to earn his passage. So Johnny took on new importance in the character of mechanic. What he was doing now nobody else in the ship could do. He no longer felt humble before sailors. He could tell them something now.

Between whiles, he worked upon a job of his own, carefully keeping it out of sight in the tiny engine room. And when one blazing hot day Joe Grundy was at the wheel, and nobody was in the forecastle, Hanging Johnny stole forward with something under his jacket.

He set it down upon Joe's bunk while he cleared a shelf for it. It was a kerosene driven fan, rescued from the launch and repaired with cunning skill. He had stolen a pint of kerosene from the steward when filling his lamp tank. He would show Joe how he appreciated his friendship. It was going to get hotter yet; Joe would know comfort. He lit the burner, watched the little motor heat up, then turned it on. The fan began to turn, then to buzz.

"Eet is a fan! Pepe shall try heem, yes?"

Pepe the Spig on bare feet reached over Johnny's shoulder and lifted the heavy machine. Johnny sprang up and tackled him in frenzy. The thing fell, the kerosene spilt and caught light, with disastrous results to Joe Grundy's bunk and personal effects. Pepe found himself rolled upon the fire, with a screaming maniac trying to throttle him. The fire went out in the struggle, and Pepe twisted clear, kicking Johnny in the stomach with his bare heel. And as Johnny fell backwards, Pepe picked up the fan and raised it to throw.

"I keel you!" he breathed.

Johnny had fallen against the stanchion of the table, bringing down the oil lamp fastened there. The glass broke at his hand, and in desperation he gripped a big piece of it. The fan was about to descend upon his head. He darted under it, and struck at Pepe's face with the glass as the doorway darkened and Joe Grundy came in from his trick at the wheel to get a smoke.

"Hullo! Broken glass, eh?" Joe exclaimed, grabbing Johnny and peering uneasily at Pepe's blood streaming face. "So that's your sort, is it? You've nigh killed him—"

"He kicked me. I was only—"

"Peeg!" screamed Pepe, shivering with fright. "He poot in your bunk thees theeng he has stole. I would stop heem—"

"I didn't steal it! I made it out of scrap, Joe. I wanted to repay something for what you've done for me!" Johnny met in Joe's face stony distaste.

"I don't want nothing from you, my lad. Pinches things and tries to stow 'em in my pew. A dirty broken bottle fighter too! Don't you never talk to me again. Come on, Pepe. You'll have to

let the Old Man stitch that mug or you'll lose an eye!"

EVEN the greasy Doctor refused to have anything to do with Johnny. Captain Peters and Mr. Toomey, the mate, would have locked him up in the lazaret but for Mr. Nolan, who had seen something of Pepe's pretty ways before and didn't think much of them. So Johnny went on cleaning up the launch. He slept there; he ate what he could get from the galley and grew more miserable every time Joe passed, avoiding him.

It was better when the wind changed and blew harder, for then the men were too busy to notice him. The first sea that rose high enough to fall on board shifted the great stove-in lighter and crashed it against the mainmast. It floated the launch with Hanging Johnny in it, and he believed he had earned praise when, without calling men from other tasks, he refastened the lashings.

It was something of a miracle that for the first and only time he contrived to pass a lashing as Joe had patiently tried to teach him. But nobody paid any attention. His clever work went unnoticed, unpraised. Every hand available was fully occupied securing that unwieldy lighter and those clumsy great buoys before they battered the bulwarks out or the masts down.

Bleak days for Hanging Johnny. When Joe Grundy refused to foregather with him, life grew horrible. When bright weather came again the old steam pinnace was inspected by the mate, and Captain Peters was brought to examine it, too. The Old Man saw a lot of queer stuff laid out neatly on the floor of the old pinnace's engine room. It was a tiny chamber, full of ancient machinery, arranged so that one man might stoke the fire and tend the engine too. There were tools, no longer rusty; the little engine glistened with hard elbow polish. In spite of his prejudice, Captain Peters looked rather kindly at the black sheep of the ship, and nodded to the mate.

"Let up on him." He didn't let Johnny hear that. "The lad's doing his best."

Johnny joined a watch again, but it didn't make him happy. Every time Pepe passed, with his bandaged eye that would never see again, somebody reminded the lad of his gutter trick. No decent sailor would take broken glass to a shipmate. Nobody heeded his desperate avowal that he had been the victim of unprovoked assault. One day when the ship required a lee helmsman to hold her before a rugged sea, he was sent to share the trick of Joe Grundy. But old Joe's grim face never turned his way.

In a squall, fore-runner of a storm, the ship was hove down so far that her ugly cargo shifted. When the squall passed, she surged through the heavy sea with one side digged so low that her lee scuppers spouted thick jets of brine that shot clear across the deck.

"We must get her around, mister," the Old Man said. "Call all hands. If she'll come around, you must take the men into the hold and trim the cargo. It'll be a nasty job."

They hauled up the fore course, furled the topgallant-sails, and tried to tack the ship. She refused to come around. They got her almost in irons, and when the Old Man cried out they must wear her, and they ran her off, she buried her lee rail until men held on and cursed.

A mountainous sea rolled aboard and lifted one of the buoys. It took the lee lifeboat off the skids in splinters.

"She isn't coming around!" the second mate stammered. He was to be married next time home.

"She must come around! Set the fores'l again!"

When they squared the after yards, and stood ready to brace her on the other tack, the sea flung her up, held her, and her scrap burden clattered over to the other side with a crash that set the Old Man's heart thumping. Hanging Johnny stood open-mouthed, terrified. His wits were flying with the scud, with the scattered debris of that lost boat. He scrambled into the launch as a sea rose to windward. His own lashing held the launch, but the sea picked up the old lighter, floated it, and crashed it against the already weakened mainmast before it passed overboard, taking with it the remaining lifeboat.

Every man in the ship worked to secure the weakened spar. Then the weather partly cleared again. The shifted cargo was jackassed back to trim. Men below clawed and bled, handling the ugly freight, until tempers were ragged as the metal. The sprung mainmast showed signs of coming adrift. There had been no such thing as a watch below. Heat, dizzy rolling, and promise of more tomorrow. And no grog. Captain Peters had told them that, definitely.

"Joe," said Johnny that night. Joe peered at him through the bit of worn canvas he was using as a towel. "Joe, I found something good today—"

"Don't you come tellin' me wot you found!" growled Joe angrily. "Larst time you found something you chucked it into my pew and nigh got me into trouble."

"I only wanted to do you a good turn because you did me one, Joe," the lad pleaded. "This is—"

"I don't want nothink to do with yer. Pinches things, and plants 'em on a shipmate; and a dirty bottle fighter, too. Be orf, me son. Yer a bad 'un."

THEY had made him keep the silly name of Hanging Johnny. He got all the dirty jobs. He was as good as anybody in the crowd. He'd show them! So when work was begun again, Johnny was first down the hold. When it came time for a spell he nipped up on deck and fetched the water bucket for the thirsty ones. When the hatches were put on again, he was last man out.

The men had been driven to a state of swearing rebellion. No grog! Men ready to drop had still to sweep up the maindeck.

Mr. Nolan had a few men with him completing the securing of the sprung mainmast. While men slunk away to steal a smoke, Johnny got a broom and swept up the deck. When he passed the second mate, who was hauling on a tackle alone, he put down his broom and lent a hand.

Mr. Nolan scarcely felt the added weight. But he grinned at the lad, and gruffly bade him leave sailors' work to sailormen; there seemed to be kindness, at least humor, in his grin.

That tiny hint of human interest shown by Mr. Nolan set Hanging Johnny back among men. He faced the crowd at supper time with his head up. He took his whack out of the mess kits and his dollop of tea from the kettle without edging back, even when shoved by Pepe. He stood a lookout in the second dogwatch, and walked the forecastle head like a man, singing.

"Admiral Peewee his own self," Joe Grundy muttered, puzzled by the change and vexed at not knowing the reason for it. He was peeved because the sudden change followed something utterly unconnected with himself, who had been the first mentor and patron of Hanging Johnny.

The wind rose to a small gale which threatened to increase.

"Square the yards, Mr. Toomey. We must make a fair wind of it or the mast will go!" the Old Man said anxiously.

Johnny hauled on braces right at the head of the line. With his nose almost stuck into the second mate's back, he sang out to all the hauling yells. His voice was squeaky, and his weight not so much; but there was pride and purpose in his work. When Pepe grabbed him and started to drag him back to the tail of the rope, he snatched clear, and held his place. Mr. Nolan grinned and encouraged him.

"You tell him, sailor! Beef and bloody bones is your meat, m'lad. Stick your thumb in his other eye, Hanging Johnny."

"Peeg's son!" muttered Pepe. "I steek knife in your belly!"

"Come on, then, do it now!" Johnny danced away, fists balled, forgetful of the cause of Pepe's blind eye. The brace had been secured. The second mate turned to put an end to the squabble; the men were ready to cheer both combatants.

Johnny slapped Pepe on the ear with an open hand, and danced away. Pepe snatched the knife from another man's belt, found his wrist gripped fast by the second mate. And before any man

could move clear, a terrific rending crash followed upon a hard squall; in a moment the mainmast came down athwart the deck, burying men in a chaos of wreckage. The mizzen mast followed, robbed of much of its support; and the *Lapwing* turned from the wind, her head dragged around by pressure of forward canvas.

"Get down there and help clear those men!" the Old Man cried out, shouldering away the helmsman and taking the wheel. The mate, the steward, the cook all ran down among the tangled gear beneath which men screamed for help. And the foremast suddenly cracked and followed the rest. The ship lay in a roaring sea, strangled by her stricken pinions, swept by tumbling waters to which she could no longer rise.

Johnny struggled clear. He crept out through the torn mainsail, dragging Pepe. Mr. Nolan still gripped Pepe's wrist, but it was the grip of a chilling hand. Mr. Nolan had life in his top end only. His legs dragged. Before Johnny could see that, he had lugged Pepe to his feet, propped him against the stump of the mainmast, and slugged him earnestly on the nose.

"Knife, eh!" he squealed, never knowing that his own scalp hung over his right eye, that blood was all over him like a mask. He slugged Pepe again, and Pepe collapsed like a burst bladder; but Pepe had kept his feet that long only by the support of the mast stump at his back.

Then Hanging Johnny went down himself. He next opened his eyes with the Old Man's anxious eyes close to his face, and Joe Grundy kneeling alongside, holding a basin of water for the Old Man's surgery.

"Say something so I know you're alive," the Old Man muttered. Joe Grundy held a pannikin of strong grog to Johnny's lips. Something must have happened, thought Johnny, to bring out that grog. He sat up, swallowed and choked, and Joe slipped an arm about him. But he remained sitting, blinking foolishly. The anxiety left the Old Man's face, and Johnny swelled to think that his recovery meant so much to the ship.

"Get into the galley and keep some water boiling," said Captain Peters.

Hanging Johnny sat there for a moment; then he saw the wreckage, the desolate ship under her broken wings. He saw Mr. Nolan laid out on deck, his tanned face like pallid wax. There was Mr. Toomey, smoking a pipe and trying to look indifferent, with one leg lashed to a broom handle, one arm strapped to his breast. There lay Pepe, the splinter of steel that felled him sticking in his head. The cook and steward hauled and heaved at the debris, seizing an arm or leg, never sure whether anything would follow the limb. Shambles.

Th galley was buried; but smoke still rose from where the smokestack once stood, and Hanging Johnny filled the boiler.

THE *Lapwing* lay like a log, and, as Captain Peters knew too well, few sailing ships made the China voyage now. The sailing trade was done. There were steamers, plenty of them, but none came within hail of that desolate expanse of ocean.

He was an old man; his available uninjured men were an elderly steward, an old cook and Joe Grundy, who toppled over while profanely asserting that he had put that stained red bandana around his head to keep his hair dry. Joe, who had about as much hair as a cork fender.

And Hanging Johnny. His skull was cracking with pain. His knees felt as if the bones were turned to burgoo. He hung on to the stove rail because he had been ordered to heat water. Hanging Johnny, perhaps the least seriously injured of all the battered crew, was not good enough sailorman to take a seaman's place about the decks, but must potter in the galley, while a flunkey and the doctor stumbled about helplessly, adding to the confusion. When Joe fell, the lad ran from the galley, and squeakily told the Old Man to make hot water himself if the cook could not. He was a sailor, he was. He'd tell all hands that. Mr. Nolan had said so, and he knew. And Captain Peters, gazing help-

lessly around at the leaping seas which pounded his crippled ship, only cared that Hanging Johnny at least possessed sound arms and legs.

"It's a ghastly mess," he said shakily. Even if he had men enough, it was doubtful if he could clear away that wreckage and rig jury spars to move the ship before most of his injured died horribly.

Mr. Nolan opened agonized eyes while Hanging Johnny forced soup between his teeth. The second mate shook his head wearily, and the soup dribbled down his shirt, but a ghostly, whimsical grin convulsed his face.

"Pepe didn't get you, Hanging Johnny. We stopped him, didn't we?"

"I socked him on the beak and knocked him out, sir!"

"Make a sailor of you yet!" Mr. Nolan swooned. It was some time later before Johnny found out that a direr hand than his had paid Pepe's account. Joe Grundy was poking about among the tangled wreckage.

The Old Man fiddled with his medicine chest, handling shiny gadgets and fragile hypodermics nervously, glancing at the most sorely stricken of his men, and then uneasily at the growing sea.

They laid the injured men on the mainhatch. Mr. Toomey dragged himself there, no hindrance if he could be no help.

Moving Mr. Nolan was a graver problem. The second mate was as courageous as a terrier, but when they tried to move him, he fainted. When he opened his eyes again, and found the steward putting pillows under him, he shook his head.

He asked for a pipeful of tobacco and when it was going full blast he set his teeth down upon the stem hard and wheezed:

"Go ahead! You'll want me out of the way when you start to clear away that pinnace. Go ahead, blast you! D'ye think I'm made o' sooji-mooji?"

Captain Peters tried to give Mr. Nolan a hypodermic, and did it so clumsily that the needle broke off and the drug squirted across the deck. Nolan grinned. The smoke jetted from his pipe.

AS THE wind rose, the broken spars began to hammer at the hull. The Old Man realized that his clipper was done for. There were his mates, fine sailormen, loyal to him and to his ship, bound for Fiddlers' Green if something were not done. And the sole hope lay in that ancient Navy pinnace, sold as scrap in a cargo of scrap. Except himself, there remained no one able to navigate the craft. So far as he knew, nobody knew how to run it. He called in the cook and the steward who, except for himself, were the only ones entirely unhurt. He called Joe Grundy, too, with his broken head, and Hanging Johnny with his plastered scalp.

"Men, you can see how we stand. I doubt if we can move Mr. Nolan again without killing him; Mr. Toomey is almost as bad. The only hope for them is for somebody to take that pinnace and try to cross some steamer track. Who knows steam engines!"

"Well, sir," said Joe Grundy, scratching his bandage, "I can stoke a b'iler."

"I only know that engines must be clean and oiled before they can run," said Johnny.

"Can you navigate, Grundy?"

"No, sir," said Joe. "I can steer, an' stoke, an' carry on wi'out weepin'—" he glanced contemptuously at Johnny, who was still shivering.

"I wonder how far these steam things can go on what fuel they can carry," the skipper mused. "I wonder if they go on wood at all?"

"Not so good," Joe grumbled. "If there's a bit o' coke left in the galley bunker—"

"There's a couple o' bags," the doctor put in. "I can burn wood," he added. His galley was smashed, the smokestack over the side, but there were men to feed.

"If that pinnace'll run at all, which ain't sartain, th' best she'll do is about a hundred mile, sir. We'd have to fill 'er to th' 'atches with coke and wood."

"And if nothing was sighted—" Captain Peters stopped. He saw it in their faces that the men knew the rest. There would be a derelict ship, laden with helpless men; and out yonder would be the

pinnace, as helpless as the ship. Hanging Johnny's throat was dry.

"There's a broken radio set in the pinnace, sir," he finally blurted out. "I've been amusing myself fixing it. I tried to tell Joe about it, but he wouldn't listen. There's all the parts, and a lot of batteries. Some of 'em are good. I know all about radio. I could fix that old set so it would send fifty miles, perhaps a hundred. There's a charger on the engine, but I never found out if it works. They took me off the job."

Captain Peters stared. In his mind radio meant tall towers, high powered electricity, things beyond his knowledge.

"Joe and me could get the engine to go, sir; then he could stoke it, and I'd work the radio. Between 'em it's the same as gettin' two hundred miles nearer steamers, isn't it, sir?" Hanging Johnny was hot with enthusiasm. He stopped short. "If there was somebody to navigate—"

"Hanging Johnny's said something!" chuckled Mr. Nolan, gray-faced. "Sling me into the pinnace, and I'd run the engine myself. All you have to do, when steam's up, is turn the little wheel valve that lets in steam, and jiggle the lever that starts her ahead or astern. Sling me into her, sir. I can—"

They did not sling Mr. Nolan in, but he coolly directed them to fill the boiler with fresh water and get up steam before putting the pinnace over. The seas were too heavy for a boat to remain alongside; the engine might not run anyhow.

They raised steam. Pipes leaked. But the propeller suddenly whirred, almost lopping off Joe's nose as he stooped to examine the lower rudder gudgeon.

"She'll run, sir!" squealed Hanging Johnny, his face all oil and soot above the little engine room canopy.

"You better save yer steam an' git busy riggin' them radio gadgets, m' lad, or you'll lose a damn good stoker," growled Joe Grundy.

CAPTAIN PETERS was nervous. He was depending upon an ancient pinnace, one old sea dog, and one green yokel who had been the butt of the ship. Hanging Johnny! What a name!

But the skipper instructed the cook and steward in their duties; then he took careful observations to fix the ship's absolute position. Lastly, he marked on a pilot chart for the steward the course he expected to steer in the pinnance.

All this in case something happened along to sight the *Lapwing*. If such a miracle happened, the same miracle might perhaps follow and find the pinnace.

All was ready when Johnny finally helped Joe rig up his aerial; and when he had rolled into the pinnace a big spool of wire and a couple of light sticks from the saloon table fiddles, he reported ready. The pinnace was crammed with coke and wood, water and stores. It took the capstan to lift her with fourfold tackles from the improvised sheers, and they launched her by chopping away the slings as she swung over the sea.

Two hundred miles to the nearest steamer track. A sea that grew hourly. And long before the old *Lapwing* faded in the gray they knew the pinnace leaked like a sieve.

Joe Grundy stoked his fire, chopped wood, mixed it with coke, sprayed it with lamp oil.

The little engine's pump worked overtime keeping the bilges free; now and then Joe's bandaged head rose above the stokehold gunwale and his blackened arms hove a bucket of greasy water overboard.

His bandage was scorched. The tiny fireroom was a giddy cave of fiery horror.

The captain steered. Johnny braced himself against an iron angle and grimly set to work to coax a spark from his set. He rigged a directional loop for receiving, and incessantly strained his ears to catch the slightest ghost of ship code. He had to hook up many batteries to get power enough—and the set was no fine modern bit of magic—but he got a faint response as night fell, and chirped to the Old Man:

"We're all right, sir! When we get inside a ship's sending radius you'll hear the buzz. And while you're standin' there doin' nothin' but steer, you just

work this key—'ere, like this—every quarter an hour or so, an' I'll get us all some grub. I'd keep sendin' all the time, but them batteries ain't so hot. Got it? That's right. You're good."

The youngster left the shelter of the steering shield, and shrank from the sharp spray that immediately drenched him. When he crept back, having given Joe a lump of tinned beef between two biscuits, he was shivering. The captain saw the chill fear in his eyes. It was only when he braced himself to fiddle with his radio set that he lost that look.

A wild night. Captain Peters felt sick at heart for his old ship and the broken men still clinging to her.

Johnny relieved Joe, and Joe lay down to rest on the coke heap. It was comfortable in that little hell hole. It was hot, and dry. Joe woke up after an hour as if a clock had struck eight bells. He made the lad carry on, and went up to relieve the helm. The Old Man let him hold the wheel while he got a flying star sight and checked off the position on the chart. Then Joe returned to his job.

"Who wants to sleep?" the Old Man grumbled. "The damned steamboat won't run long enough to make a sailorman tired."

Day broke. "How much fuel's left?" the Old Man croaked down the speaking tube.

"More'n 'arf gone!" the muffled voice came back. That voice sounded strangled, tired. The captain peered wearily ahead. In all the tumbling tumult of grey seas no speck appeared. Sea, sky, spray, scud, and in the midst a tiny steel steamboat, long since condemned to the knacker's yard, kept afloat and punching her way forward by the heart and pulses of three widely different men of the sea.

"Do you get no answer from that radio?" the Old Man asked impatiently.

"I can hear a ship plain, sir. If the blessed loop 'ud stay steady I'd get a line on it. Worst o' these homemades is— 'Ullo! That's clear enough!" Johnny grew feverishly intent. He began sending his signal as fast as fingers would fly. He added the news that the *Lapwing* was wrecked and that the pinnace was—

The Old Man yanked away the lad's ear phones to make himself heard. "Here, tell 'em our position and course—" Captain Peters paused to think what position to give.

"Tell them we're in Latitude 30 North, Longitude 160 West and we're steering South-south-east. And you tell 'em—"

"It's dead, sir! The set's done for. There ain't no more juice," whispered Hanging Johnny.

"STEAM'S leakin' bad, sir!" old Joe wheezed up through the tube.

"You must keep her going," the skipper spoke back. "She's moving too slowly now to hold her clear of the seas."

Johnny bent over his set. He tried every combination of batteries, though he knew that the batteries were dead. They had given service far past their indicated life. Seas rolled up and burst against the pinnace's bow; the Old Man fought the sea with every last fibre in him.

"There's a pipe burst down 'ere, sir," Joe's ghostly voice crept up. "Fuel's most gone, too."

A great comber reared against the pinnace. She was moving more slowly. The sea caught her on the bow, and she did not rise. A crashing impact took away the forward aerial spar. It smashed in the steering hood and scattered the radio set in shards and shreds. It almost drowned Hanging Johnny, and it flung the Old Man away from the tiny wheel against the other side of the shield.

Steam spouted up through the speaking tube. There was a dull clangor. Another sea rolled up, lazily, and swept the boat. There was a scream from somewhere, a yell nearby, and when the Old Man staggered up, the pinnace had almost stopped. He saw Johnny ducking out of the flying water, head wrapped in arms, scuttling out of the steering pit and over the fiddley, to disappear into the warmer bowels of the pinnace.

"That's him!" grunted the Old Man, and wedged the compass between his body and the remaining bit of the steering hood.

"Give her headway! She'll roll over!"

he roared into the speaking tube. A sea rolled her down, swept her, and the Old Man hung on to the useless wheel, waiting another—the last one.

The pinnace began to move again. Unbelievably, she steered. The Old Man nursed her to her course, and she picked her way through seas that lifted her, now that she fought them, instead of beating her down.

"All right below, Grundy?" The query was scarcely hopeful.

"Hrr-mm-ph!" came back the answer. The pinnace steamed on.

Through stinging eyes Captain Peters made out a great steamer, steaming straight towards him as the black of night turned to the gray of dawn.

"Give her all you've got, Grundy!" he screamed down the tube.

The pinnace slowed, staggered, and stopped. She began to roll in ghastly fashion in the trough of the steep seas. No craft could roll like that and survive.

"For God's sake get her moving!" he yelled through the tube. "And send up that gutless stowaway to help me rig a drag or we'll be gone before that steamer—"

A jet of steam from the tube, and a muffled groan; the pinnace dipped her gunwale clear to the steel casing over the engine.

It was clear that the steamer had not yet seen them. She changed her course twice. Always she came nearer, but not directly. The pinnace could never last. All the Old Man could do was to hang on. He tried to crawl out on the slippery little foredeck, vaguely intending to get some sort of drag over the bow; there was nothing to rig a drag with. He regained the steering shield and hung on. The pinnace quivered under him.

"It's the end!" he muttered. His stinging eyes sought the steamer. Then the pinnace thrust her nose deep into a sea. She shook all over. He suddenly realized that she was moving again—going ahead! He twirled the wheel. The pinnace squattered heavily towards the steamer, loggy with leakage. But she made it. She was seen. The great steamer swept grandly around, her decks alive with curious passengers; she made a lee, poured oil on the seas, and uniformed men dropped from her rails to the pinnace and sent up Captain Peters in a sling.

"Grundy's down there—and—and another man," the Old Man croaked, indicating the closed engine hatch.

They opened up the little furnace room. Steam belched forth. They found Joe Grundy lying on the greasy floor, water swashing about him. He was plastered from head to foot with oily waste, scalded to rawness, unconscious. And across him sprawled Hanging Johnny, naked to the waist, one hand still on the lever that his fall had yanked back to "Stop". His dungaree shirt was wrapped around the main steam-pipe. The fire was a mere glowing heap of wood embers. The last bit of fuel was blazing just inside the firebox door.

THEY were talking about it as the *Warrigal* steamed north-west, seeking the *Lapwing*.

"Busted right in my mug, that steam did," Joe Grundy was saying in the little ship's hospital. "Laid me out proper. And down come Hangin' Johnny, shiverin' wi' fright, 'e wos. He wropped me up in greasy rags, saved my life, sartain. And then 'e wropped 'is shirt round the busted pipe, tore orf the seat of the tool locker and chopped it up, and got the blessed engine goin' again. A sailorman all right, is Hanging Johnny, Missy."

The trim little nurse smiled, gave Joe a drink, and gently forced him to lie down. Joe hadn't much skin left. She went to seek Hanging Johnny. He had not been quite so badly scalded as Joe, but badly enough. She had left him in a comfortable deck chair out of the wind. He wasn't there now. She hurried around the deckhouse. Men were gathered about an officer who was watching through the glasses a sea-scoured hulk on which flew a ragged weft of bunting. Above all, a smoky lantern swung, its light not yet visible in the twilight.

In the middle of the crowd stood Hanging Johnny, his face bandaged, his hands wrapped, but on his head sat perkily a borrowed radio officer's cap; the

radio officer himself leaned against the rail, gazing at him in frank amazement. Captain Peters was on the bridge with his rescuer, swallowing a lump in his throat as he scanned the leaping seas. How many of those battered men were still living? He silently gave credit to Hanging Johnny in the name of the survivors, whoever they were.

"And you rigged a set out of that junk?" said the radio man.

"It wasn't nothing," said Johnny indifferently. "I was good at fixin' sets. Everybody said so. But it conked out too soon, just the same."

"You kept it going long enough for us to pick you up on the directional loop. Our set is always going out of whack. It beats me. You should ask the company for a job."

"Job?" echoed Johnny. "Could I get a job fixin' sets on a boat? This boat? Then I'd be a sailor too, wouldn't I?"

"Bet your boots you would! I'd say you were a wonder at fixing things, and everybody's talking about you as a—"

But Hanging Johnny heard no more. The trim little nurse found him and came forward purposefully. She was smiling, but he was her patient, and had been allowed outside the hospital only because the room was needed for men yet to come. He had not noticed her before, while she was dressing his hurts. Now he saw that she was young, and pretty, and smart as paint; she was much prettier, smarter, nicer than Sally, who had gone off with a soldier. And she belonged to this ship. If he got a job as a radio man—who was it used to tell him a sailor's life is a dog's life? Who was that, now?

"Come along, Hanging Johnny!" the little nurse ordered, taking his arm in a grip altogether out of proportion to her size. "However did you get a name like that? Time to get some rest. I told you not to tire yourself."

"Can't I stay outside if I stay in the chair?" he pleaded, his eyes fastened in fascination upon her. "I want to see Mr. Nolan brought aboard safe. Please, miss."

"Is Mr. Nolan the officer who told you you'd be a sailor yet? The one with a broken back? You gabbled so much about him while I was dressing you."

"That's him. Gentleman he is, Miss. Don't shunt me off."

Smilingly she pulled his chair to a sheltered spot from which he could watch the taking off of the *Lapwing's* men. She stood beside him, her hand on his shoulder protectingly. There would be lots of work for her soon. Now he was her prize patient. The world loves a hero, however humble his origin—and she agreed with the world.

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"Damn waitin'! I call the gray hoss!"

ONE MAN'S WAR

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

"SO NOW you know all the news," concluded Latour, "about the American general Jacquesson and the English who will capture New Orleans with their ships of soldiers."

Carpenter's cabin nested snugly near the mouth of Bayou Peche of northwestern Lake Borgne. Latour sat beside the fireplace finishing his pipe; he would not stay to supper, being on his way home from New Orleans, and wished to push on before dark to his own cabin across the lake.

"It is nothing to us," he went on. Puzzled thought crinkled his swart face, weathered by wind and water. "We are French; we fish for a living. War is a poor business. Let the Americans and the English fight. We'll sell fish just the same."

Carpenter, lean and brown, nodded from his stool. French on his mother's

side, he was Jean Charpentier to these other lake fishermen. New Orleans, with its Spanish and French and Americans, meant little to him except as a market. A man must earn a living.

"Me, I'm of soldier blood," pursued Latour. "My grandfather was a grenadier; he fought the English on the Plains of Abraham, at Quebec, and for what? To have his leg cut off by a cannon ball, by which he died. There is only his old musket in my cabin. You maybe had soldiers in your family, Jean?"

Carpenter nodded. "Before I was born, my father went as a volunteer from Kentucky with the soldiers against the Injuns in the northwest. No affair of his; he was out for glory."

"The beating of the drums makes a great noise," said Latour sagely.

"You bet. And what happened? The general was a fool. They were whipped in an ambush, and the soldiers who escaped were blamed for not staying to be butchered."

"He was an American, eh?" said Latour. "If he were here now, he'd have you be a soldier in this war?"

"Not much. He was done with marching out to be killed in a war he didn't make. He left the United States and settled down here in Louisiana."

"Your mother, she was French. You are one of us."

Carpenter's lean, hard features darkened.

"She and my father both died in one day from the cholera. I live by fishing; the Americans have done nothing for me. You folks have made me one of you."

Latour rapped the ashes from his black pipe and stood up.

"We French of Louisiana did not ask the United States to take us from France. Let the Americans and the English fight; we mind our own business. You'll see, Cap'n Lafitte will do the same." He cocked an ear. "The wind is changing, eh? Tomorrow will be fair. You'll have fish for market?"

Carpenter nodded. "Yes. I haven't run the lines for three days."

"Then you'll see the excitement, and the angry General Jacquesson who calls for people to fight the English. You can't go by Lake Ponchartrain; it'll be too rough for a loaded boat."

"I'll take the outside passage, by the Gulf. Longer, but I don't like the idea of the crooked Rigolets, and Ponchartrain to cross at the other end."

"Maybe not so long." Latour fingered his grizzled thatch and grinned. "The English ships are coming; maybe you meet them and sell your fish. What a market for us, all those soldiers! You can go on to Grand Terre and ask what Cap'n Lafitte thinks about this war. No war of his. He owes the Americans nothing, either."

"Good idea," said Carpenter. "I'll talk with Lafitte."

"And maybe bring back a cask of cognac for us, eh? *Au revoir.*"

Carpenter, from the cabin door, watched Latour push out. The waters of the lake were still running from the whip of the December gale, but the little sloop had already made the trip through Ponchartrain and by the Pass Rigolets into Lake Borgne.

Closing the door, Carpenter turned to the supper pot simmering over the fire. A huge British fleet coming from Jamaica to take all Louisiana, eh? An American general arriving in a fury; this Jackson was a beanpole of a man, snorting blood and thunder, by Latour's tell. Carpenter rubbed his lean cheek and shrugged. This country knew little of the war, and cared less; besides, a man had to earn a living.

MORNING dawned fair. Carpenter ran his lines and shifted the fish from his skiff to the small sloop; it was a good catch. Ready at length, he shoved out and hoisted sail. The sheet taut, he hugged the tiller aft of the box hold and its flopping cargo, and headed the *Belle Felice* down the lake. The sloop heeled; her lee gun'ls hissed as she sheared aslant and shattered the slapping waves into spray. In the eastward opened the wide sound by which Lake Borgne joined the Gulf.

His intention was to swing south along the Gulf coast for Grand Terre and Lafitte's settlement, to get news and opinions. Lafitte the free-trader was not

likely to fight for the Americans, who called him pirate and sought to hang him; far from likely, indeed! As the *Belle Felice* slipped into the sound, however, Carpenter descried another sail, that of a fishing sloop tearing for the lake. Somebody in a hurry—it was the *Bon Voyage*, he perceived. That would be Pierre Langlade. Aye, tacking up to speak him.

The two craft came close and eased. Langlade hailed excitedly.

"The great fleet is come! I've seen it! You must turn back. I bear the alarm."

"How far are they?" demanded Carpenter.

"You'll see them in an hour," bawled the other. "Better turn back! They make war!"

Carpenter laughed. "No war of mine!" said he, and waved his hand in farewell.

Sheet taut again, the *Belle Felice* raced along. When, in time, Carpenter raised a fringe of masts on the eastern horizon, he changed course; curiosity drew him, and he recalled what Latour had said. This British fleet should, indeed, be a prime market for his fish!

The masts rose higher, flags streaming in the breeze; bright colors glimmered in the sunshine. Ships? Good lord, what a sight! Twenty, thirty, forty—ships of the line, frigates, corvettes, enormous merchantmen transports; sides black, starred with gun-ports. Faces, staring from the rails and the open ports. Flag everywhere, flaunting crosses and crests and royal arms.

As Carpenter bore down upon that host, something queer rose in him. He had no quarrel with these British. He was a French fisherman of the bayous; soldiering had no lure at all for him. His entire lean young life had been remote and lonely near the canebrakes and coast waters; and what he had heard of the United States was not too pleasing. Yet something rose in him, as he approached these braggart ships crowded with uniforms; something hot mounted into his throat and stiffened his spine, and prickled his scalp.

Abruptly, he abandoned his design of calling fish for sale. He let the sloop slide along past the line of ships, in silence. Soldiers in rakish caps and scarlet jackets looked down, white teeth grinning in hairy bronzed faces. One of them cried out, leaned over the rail, and held up a silver coin, with a gesture.

Carpenter shrugged and veered in with a twist of the tiller. A dangling line was let down. He made fast a good fish by the gills, and it went up, but the coin did not come down.

The man above had brick whiskers; he was perched on the rail, now, stayed by the shrouds. A big, spare fellow in a plaid petticoat. Carpenter held up his hand, called on him to toss down the coin. Instead, the soldier in petticoats swung around and slapped his broad sternsheets, and shouted something in broad Scots that Carpenter did not understand at all.

He understod the roar of laughter that went up from the decks above, and from the ships to right and left. A tide of dull red suffused his brown hard cheeks; he lifted his fist and shook it at the brick whiskers above. This caused another roar of mirth, and brought upon him a hail of mocking insults, jeers, taunts. Would he come up and fight?

For an instant he was sorely tempted to do just that, but the storm of jeers drove under his skin with sudden bitter shame. An officer appeared and called down to him, telling him to lay aboard and his fish would be bought.

"To hell with the lot of you!" retorted Carpenter, and sent his sloop slanting out upon the wind, with laughter echoing after him.

In a boil, he drove the *Bell Felice* to westward, hour after hour.

When at length he drew in toward the island of Grand Terre, he stared with incredulous eyes; the place opened black, bleak, silent, scuttled craft, buildings fired. As the sloop drew in toward the deserted landing, a single figure appeared, strolling down to meet the arrival. Carpenter recognized Denis Legere, of the Lafitte company, and hailed him with dismayed curiosity.

"Denis! What's happened here? Did the British come and burn the place?"

Legere grinned. "No, it was an American ship from New Orleans. As you see, she made a good job of it. We did not

put up a fight at all; there was no great damage done. I remained alone, to give word to anyone who came."

"Has the cap'n joined the British, then?"

"No, no! He's gone to New Orleans, to help General Jackson fight the English."

Carpenter stared. "What the devil! The Americans destroy Grand Terre, and Lafitte goes to help them fight the British?"

Denis Legere rubbed his nose, and screwed out his crooked smile.

"Oh, he says this is his country, and anybody who comes here carrying the hatchet is an enemy of Jean Lafitte. Besides," and he winked significantly, "the Americans took some of our men to jail in New Orleans. So, if the General Jacquesson wants to use Lafitte and his men to fight, he must set them free."

"So Cap'n Lafitte fights a little war of his own, eh?"

"Why not?" Legere shrugged. "One fights by fear, by shame, by anger; for revenge, for money, for glory; because one wishes, because one must. Me, I fight for Cap'n Lafitte, who fights for Jean Lafitte and General Jacquesson, who fights because the English insult him and Louisiana. *Eh bien!* And you? Do you come from Lake Borgne to fight because the fishing is spoiled, maybe?"

Carpenter's face darkened. "What would you do if a redcoat you never saw before slapped his *derriere* at you in front of the whole fleet and make a mock of you?"

"Slapped his *derriere* at Denis Legere?" cried the other. "Name of a name! I'd kill him, of course."

Carpenter rasped an oath. "I'm for fighting, you bet. New Orleans be damned! I'll find that fellow in petticoats and brick whiskers again; that's all I want."

He shoved out, leaving Denis Legere shaking with laughter; the grinning face and broad stern of the kilted soldier in British scarlet pursued him all the way to New Orleans. His fish were spoiled. His sun-bleached hair, unshaven features, fisherman's ragged shirt and knee-breeches were not fit garb for the great city, but none of all this bothered him; he was shaken by astonishment when he landed.

THE waterfront markets were all empty. The business streets, the Vieux Carre, the whole town, were in a cheering jostle; oyster stalls and coffee stalls did a roaring trade. Citizens, old and young, armed and unarmed, ragged or uniformed, were drilling and marching.

Carpenter stared, rather blankly; Latour had said nothing of such doings. What did Creoles, French, Spanish, blacks, care about an American war? Obviously, however, they did care. A blazing contagion swept the street throngs. Carpenter halted to hear a little old *avocat* in a black coat explain the matter to a circle of gaping 'Cajuns from the back settlements.

"It is like this, my friends. One must have a cause, you comprehend? Yesterday, we have nothing. We are Spanish, Acadian, French; we go to law, we drink morning coffee, we talk business, we are each man for himself and the United States does not interest us. Today, the English come. *Voila!* We have a cause. We are just one people. We say: 'Damned lobster-backs! Me, I am *un brave, un Americain!* Yankee Doodle!' That is the way of it, my friends. What is it the Bible says? 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' That is true."

John Carpenter turned away, a slight flush mantling his hard features again. By God, the *avocat* was right! He was an American, and he had a cause! Suddenly he knew why his scalp had prickled as he ran down past the British ships. A slapped butt and a storm of jeers—well, he would lay for those brick whiskers, right enough, but back of it all was something else. These were his own people, and they had a cause.

Wide-eyed, hard-lipped, bronzed and stalwart, he strode along Royal Street and came to a brick front of three stories, where the United States flag hung from an upper window. Citizens and soldiers were passing in and out.

"What's going on here?" Carpenter asked of the broadcloth and glossy high hat at his elbow. The merchant eyed the ragged shirt and bare shanks.

"It is the office of the general; he prepares to fight the enemy."

"Now?" demanded Carpenter. "Here?"

The merchant shrugged. "I don't know. He wants men and guns. You offer yourself?"

"Well, I aim to fight," said Carpenter in English. He shouldered forward through the crowd, and climbed the stairs, following the trail of those who came and went.

The upper room was filled with men and talk. Behind a table sat a figure in high-collared coat of blue and gilt, booted legs in white breeches. A tall, thin, furious man, with long sickly-yellow face and ginger hair brushing out, fierce blue eyes bright.

"They shall never get to the city save over our dead bodies!" lifted his voice, and caught sight of the ragged figure. "God's name, what do you want?"

A hush fell, and Carpenter retorted with his name.

"I'm from Lake Borgne. I aim to help you fight the British."

"By the Eternal, bravely put!" bellowed the general. "I need every man. You're French? Report to Major Plauche of the company of Home Guards."

"I'm no more French than American," retorted Carpenter, bristling. "Where do I get a gun?"

"Damnation! How do I know?" Yellow-face pounded the table with angry fist. "The city attics are being ransacked for weapons. I even had to borrow the flints from the pistol of Captain Lafitte. Go see Major Plauche of the Home Guards."

"The Home Guards be damned," said Carpenter, and stalked out amid hot stares.

No gun, eh? Well, he knew where there was one. Before he reached the waterfront, he learned that every man had to provide his own gun and ammunition. Fair enough!

He shoved out with the sloop, jettisoned his spoiled fish, and headed down the river and on around for the sound and Lake Borgne. The fleet with the gay flags had scattered, but no hail stopped the *Belle Felice*. At last, in his home waters, Carpenter headed up for Joseph Latour's cabin.

Latour's sloop was gone, probably with a load of fish; that did not matter. Making fast at the landing, Carpenter headed for the cabin at a run. At his hail, Annette Latour met him at the door, the baby in her arms.

"Jean! You sold your fish? Maybe to the English?"

"The fish are spoiled," said Carpenter. "One of the English soldiers stole a fish, stood on the rail, and slapped his *derriere* at me. Cap'n Lafitte is fighting them. I'm going to join in. Where's Joseph?"

"Gone to war—everybody on the lake is gone! The English are ruffians. They sent barges with cannon to drive away some American ships. Now they've seized the plantations and we can get no sugar. The cannon frighten the fish and the baby, here, and me. So Joseph has gone to fight the English."

"Good!" Carpenter laughed. "Did he take the old gun?"

"The great musket? No. Of what use is it? Even if it's not loaded, he's afraid of both ends of it."

"Let me see it."

Annette led him in and showed him the musket—a Charleville of 1753, from the armories of France.

Handling it, Carpenter saw that the metal was well greased; but it was a cumbrous thing with its huge stock and immense iron barrel, of bore the size of his thumb. Annette prattled on, eagerly.

"I know all about it; Joseph has told me. This with the flint in its jaws is the cock. Here is the pan, which feeds the fire to the touch-hole. This upended piece of steel, like a soldier kneeling, is the *batterie*—in English, the frizzen. You see how the knees of the frizzen fit over the top of the pan and cover it? Do you know all this?"

Carpenter shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Annette."

"Good! I show you. One brings the cock to half cock and throws the frizzen back on its spring hinge, to bare the pan; one fills the pan with powder; with the frizzen upright again, the pan is covered. One loads into the muzzle with the car-

tridge of powder, and the ball. One brings the cock far back—click! One aims, one shuts the eyes, and pulls on the trigger—thus!"

She suited action to words, excitedly.

"The cock descends, driving the frizzen from the pan; the flint scrapes the frizzen and makes sparks, which fall into the powder; the pan goes *fizz!* and lights the powder in the touch-hole, the touch-holes goes *fizz!* and lights the powder in the gun—and the gun goes *boom!* Joseph says maybe the man in front gets killed, but certainly the man behind is black and blue."

Carpenter grinned. "A gun is a gun, Annette. I'll take this anyhow. Have you any powder and ball?"

"Joseph took it all. But here are three cartridges in a wooden box. You have only to tear off the leather top."

Carpenter went to work. The powder in the puckered end of the first parchment case was hard-caked. The powder in the second cartridge was also caked. In the third, the black grains moved to his thumb and finger.

He filled the pan, closed it, stamped the butt on the floor to settle the powder into the touch-hole and emptied the powder from the torn cartridge into the muzzle. The ball and paper followed, and he rammed them home.

"Why not two balls?" queried Annette. "You have two insults to avenge —the stolen fish, and the slap!"

"Right," said Carpenter cheerfully, and rammed in the second ball. The old Charleville was ready for use, now or later.

Then farewell to Annette and off again for New Orleans by the quickest way possible, Lake Ponchartrain this time.

HE found the city less lively, as though poised on tiptoe waiting for something to happen. No men drilling this afternoon; but mutters of thunder rolled up from the south. Lugging the heavy Charleville, Carpenter stopped the first man he saw.

"The army? You'll find it four miles below the city, on the plain of Chalmette."

"Any fighting yet?"

"No. You'll be in time. The British have landed—seven thousand of them!"

The road down the river was well trampled. It branched from the levee for the plain of Chalmette and the plantations cut by canals, which in season turned the mill wheels of the sugar factories.

Carpenter came at last to Antoine Macarte's plantation house and descried soldiers stationed here. Horsemen rode to and fro; southward were more soldiers, and gunfire from ships with the American flag.

A rider in blue and white, in gilt epaulettes and fine chapeau, came plunging for the house. The horse was reined in; General Jackson, he of the yellow face and fierce eyes, looked down with a scowl of recognition.

"God's name, where did you get that gun?" he barked. "I remember you, you damned impudent scoundrel! I wish I had a thousand like you. Have you ammunition for that infant cannon?"

"One charge of powder and two balls," said Carpenter, with his quick smile.

"I can't help you; I have more men than guns, more guns than powder."

"I'm all loaded for a redcoat. Where do I go?"

"By the Eternal, you'll have opportunity! We're holding the Rodriguez canal; go to the east and report there."

With the Charleville galling his shoulder, Carpenter set off.

The Rodriguez canal, extending between the river levee and the cypress swamps toward the lake, was in a flurry of action. Men were madly digging the scant soil; carts brought cypress logs, cotton bales, sugar hogsheads to be filled with earth. All kinds of men—French, Spanish, blacks, creoles, frontiersmen. Upon the plain beyond were horse and foot in groups. Amid the plantation fields southward, showed glints of massed scarlet.

At the east end of the canal were Choctaw warriors, painted yellow and black, lying around like alligators. A horde of men in hunting shirts and leggins, with long rifles leaned against the stumps, dug a trench further in the swamp and trimmed cypress trees into logs with ringing axes.

"By thunder, look who's hyar!" went up a shout of greeting. "Say, friend, do you reckon you can score with that old blazer?"

Carpenter allowed he could, as they gathered round.

"A barn door at a hundred paces is small mark for a smooth-bore like that 'un!" was the comment. "The ball from shoulder height grounds at a hundred and fifty; I've shot my pap's old Revolution musket, and hittin' ary mark is a chance of by guess and by gosh. With my Tennessee rifle I can drive a peg at sixty paces and down runnin' buck at a hundred. That thar old piece hasn't nary sight on the barrel."

"It'll do what I want," said Carpenter shortly. A tall, lank, squint-eyed fellow drawled challenge direct.

"I'm Tobe Hankins, stranger. I'll shoot ye for the bacon at a hundred paces and give you five tries to my one. Yes?"

"Go to the devil," retorted Carpenter. "You save your breath and I'll save my powder."

A horse laugh erupted from Hankins. "Shed your cannon, then, grab a spade or an axe, and git to work! When them redcoats come to a scrimmage, I'll try ye out at fair buck range."

The riflemen were Tennesseeans, come by shank and by boat from the north. Kentuckians were on the way. The ditch and breastworks steadily lengthened into the swamp; it was ooze knee-high. Only the Choctaws idled, painted for war, sunning themselves, and hard to see as moccasins.

Gossip flew on all sides, and Carpenter drank it in eagerly.

"Ten thousand British, by the tell. We got twenty-five hundred."

"Fair odds! Them pirates of Lafitte's are good. Militia and volunteers. Eight hundred rifles can do a powerful lot of damage. I hear we're to fight Scotch in petticoats and a hull regiment of black sojers from Jamaiky."

"Hell! We'll match 'em with these Injuns and that passel o' free blacks and slave blacks up the line. Them British may be all sorts, but with this hyar muster o' skins we're all sorts of Americans, by gosh!"

Carpenter paused to wipe sweat from his nose, and grinned at Tobe Hankins.

"Why did you come clear from Tennessee to fight?"

"Why?" drawled the other, and spat. "Danged if we 'uns aim to let the river be shut off to free trade! That's the chip on the shoulder, partner. And ain't we Americans?"

NIGHT came on. From here, little could be seen of any action. A company of the Tennessee men filed off into the swamp. Their rifles were hard cracking; they came panting back again. The Choctaws scouted and returned, saying nothing, but wiping knives and hatchets.

Men in red and green were stealing through the swamp. The Choctaws glided out. The riflemen crouched. Carpenter bolted for the big Charleville, stowed in a dry spot; but at the first volley, the enemy scattered. The Tennesseeans whooped, and Tobe Hankins pounded Carpenter on the shoulder.

"Thanks for givin' us fellers one fire before you let loose and end the war, partner!"

Jests flew thick and fast at the Charleville, but Carpenter grinned and kept quiet.

The breastworks on the right all thundered at once; guns from the plain made answer, spouting flame and smoke. Silence fell again and Carpenter curled up on a cotton bale.

Dawn brought breakfast—everybody swigging hot black coffee, munching corn bread and strips of sun-cured beef. The early morning fog rested thick and dank; breastworks and swamp and open plain were smothered in white. Men shielded the pans of their rifles with caps and shirts, and swore at the fleecy mist.

Then cheers came sweeping along from point to point. Through the fog came General Jackson, breeched and booted and soiled, hobbling with a cane.

"Hurray for Old Hickory!"

"It's the day, boys," he said, his eye sweeping them. "They're getting ready; they'll attack at sunrise."

"All we want is cl'ar sights and fair buck range!"

"That's the talk. Close in on your

right, aim for their middles, give 'em hell!"

The general wheeled about and was lost to sight.

"Time to freshen priming!" went the word. The Tennessee men grabbed up long rifles, and frizzens clicked as pans were opened. Palms smacked the lock plates to dump the priming; powder-horns tapped as they refilled the pans. Plenty of powder here to be borrowed, thought Carpenter, but never a ball to fit the old Charleville.

Tobe Hankins, of greasy beard and yellow teeth, grinned at him.

"Come along, bare shanks, fetch yore piece! Call the shot when ready."

The hurrying files stopped, moiled, and settled into ranks four deep. Carpenter found himself crowded to the rear, and was content to wait. The thought of brick whiskers lingered ever in his mind.

Along the front of the breastworks lifted a stir. Muffled voices, rustle and shuffle and clatter. From the south came distant orders, the creak of cannon over the soggy ground.

"Pick yore opposite man," lifted Tennessee voices. "Count the files. Hold so yore sight cuts the cross-belt buckle!"

"Better draw fine between the eyes, to 'low for drop! Then you're sure to land somewhere in the vitals. One man to a ball, then pop another."

"Danged if war ain't a one-man affair!" said somebody. "I fit at the River Raisin and under Old Hickory ag'in the Creeks. All I ever see when we opened up was a figger blockin' my sights. Down that, and looked for another."

The horse laugh of Tobe Hankins blared out.

"Wait till that French smooth-bore lets go! That'll end the war, you bet!"

Carpenter scowled; making sport of a bitter business riled him. One man war, eh? Maybe. Lafitte fought to get his men out of jail, Latour because his baby was frightened, these riflemen to keep the river open. John Carpenter, by thunder, was here with one charge of powder and a clumsy musket of sixty years back, to wipe out the memory of a slapped butt. So?

Perhaps, perhaps not. Men of all colors here, of all races, each with his own thoughts and his own reasons; but the old *avocat* had hit the nail on the head. All together had one cause. A cause. The Britishers were all sorts and conditions of men, and they too had a cause.

Swearing at the fog, the Tennesseeans nursed their rifles, peering into the billowy drift. The dulled tramp of marching feet sounded, but at thirty paces the view was blanked. Then sun and breeze tossed the fog.

"She'll scale up in five minutes!" went the word. A rocket from the depths in the south swished high over the breastworks, showering sparks in the wake of its black tail.

"Lookee thar! Look — they're a-coming!"

The fog was breaking into thin patches ruddied by masses of crimson. Gaps showing along the plain were walled by solid ranks of red coming at quick-step.

Scarlet coats, white cross-belts, tall peaked grenadier hats, gaitered calves— ranks of them! Glitter of brass, bayonets on the slanting muskets. Officers afoot, a horse or two carrying gleaming figures. The ranks moved all as one man; the gaitered calves moved all together, up, down, up, down.

"Gawd, boys! What a mark!" went up a voice. "Whar are them Scotch in petticoats? I mean to get Liz a bonnet!" It was Tobe Hankins, all a-stare.

The riflemen were on their feet. Locks clicked as hammers were thumbed to cock. The front rank leaned to the long irons laid over the breastworks, and cuddled the stocks to their cheeks.

Far on the right a cannon belched, rifting the fog there into shreds; the batteries in, shaking the air, balls and spewing grape rending the fog to tatters. Carpenter, from his rear rank, gaped with eyes abulge; the moving walls of red were spaced with holes. The holes closed. Not a musket there was leveled. The ranks of scarlet were solid as ever, but men had died.

The breeze from the river brought rolling cannon smoke, and a storm of yapping voices rang out along the breastworks.

"Damn the smoke! Tell them fellers to quit and give us a chance! Can you see?"

"You bet. I count two hundred to a front in this hyar column. Four ranks—that's eight hundred. Less'n one to a rifle, boys!"

Banners streaming red and white, blue and gilt. White cross-belts upon a scarlet field. Gaitered legs up, down, bodies pitching forward or hurled away as grape and cannon balls smashed into them.

The Scots regiments in rakish bonnets and kilts were still small upon the background. Silence fell along the line. The cannon ceased. Carpenter heard plainly the tramp, tramp and jangle of those legs moving as one.

"Steady, lads, steady!" drifted an officer's voice.

The riflemen settled lower, earnestly. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, nerves broke to the strain. A voice yelped out: "Damn waiting! I call the gray hoss!" A whiplike crack as the rifle spoke. A far two hundred paces out, an officer on a gray horse tossed his sword high and toppled sideways.

The red column leaned to their bayonets, broke into the double. A gusty cheer came from them.

"Sukey says buck range!" growled Tobe Hankins. "Let 'em have it!"

PANS fumed, muzzles spurted in a long rattling roll, like surf crashing upon the shore. Men yapped excitedly at hits. Carpenter tried to see, but the smoke clung to the air. The first line of riflemen were elbowed back to reload, as the second line dashed through, and with scarcely a pause fired into the eddies.

The ruddied field out there in the smoke disappeared completely in a gush of roaring white; riding the thunderclap, a blast of hurricane hail swept overhead. The volley had been fired from the hip. It was high and harmless.

Out there in the smoke things happened. Red forms dropped. Others staggered and sank. The solid ranks had crumbled to the gusts of lead. The standing fragments wavered, and behind a group of uneven bayonets an officer beat his men on with the flat of his sword. Again the smoke drifted down.

The Tennesseeans, pressed in a jumble against the breastworks, craning with rifles searching. "We've downed 'em! They're on the run!"

"Watch out for the next—hyar they come!" yelled Tobe Hankins exultantly. He caught sight of Carpenter, and grinned. "Save yore fire, pardner, till the bonnets come!"

Carpenter gripped to his musket and waited, confused and yet resolved not to waste his one shot. The second column, dim in the smoke, reeled to the quick rifles. The third column was close to their rear; the two merged together but could not keep on. The storm in their faces blew them down, blew them back.

"Last try!" shouted somebody. "Hyar come the petticoats!"

Tartans fluttered; a skirl of bagpipes pierced the air. Bare knees moved up and down; rakish headgear bobbed above crimsoned hardset faces. Carpenter looked for the brick whiskers, thought he sighted them, lifted his musket with a sudden yell.

Damnation! The rifle volley cloaked his view. The Tennesseans crowded for a shot, loaded and fired with new fury; some leaped to the breastworks and stood there, seizing reloaded rifles passed up from below, shooting pointblank with scarcely an aim.

Carpenter was not to be stopped now. He scrambled up, glimpsed shadowy forms weaving through the murk; bracing himself to the shock, he pulled trigger to speed the two balls. The snaky high hammer bulked in his eye, the trigger did not budge. Half cock! With a savage oath, he jerked the hammer to full cock, seeking for a mark.

A sudden stillness keened his humming ears. The firing had ceased. A rippling chorus of yells and cheers ran along the breastworks; somewhere, fife and drum struck into the saucy swing of "Yankee Doodle." The riflemen capered, slapped backs, yelled themselves hoarse.

The smoke drifted and thinned. For a hundred paces, the plain in front of the breastworks was clean, except for occasional patches of scarlet thrown out by the shoaling breakers of death. Beyond that, for fifty paces the plain was a gay tapestry with ragged fringes spread far back. Onward in the south, it was dotted with scarlet coats by ones and twos, as

squads of men made disorderly rally at safe distance.

"By Gawd, now I get me a bonnet for Liz, and a good 'un!"

Tobe Hankins leaped from the breastworks and into the clear. Hulking and shaggy, he ambled on, rifle careless in the crook of his arm. He was in the gay tapestry of slaughter now, peering about, poking with moccasined toe, going on.

"Cussed particular, ain't he?" said somebody.

"Allowed he wanted an officer's gear with a proper brooch, for Liz to set store by. He says—"

"Lookee! He's got jumped!"

"Hey, Tobe! Tobe! Behind you!"

A dead man had come alive. Scarlet jacket and plaid petticoat, tousled head all crimson, he was up in motion, wordless, heavy broadsword in hand.

HANKINS swung around and leveled his rifle. The pan flashed. Swift as light, he jerked hatchet from belt and threw it. The Scot dodged that streak of light and came on. Hankins ran for it, bounding long-legged with strides prodigious, while his beard floated over one shoulder grotesquely. With a wild shout, the Scot was hot after him—a furious, brawny man, piston knees making speed, broadsword glittering.

The Tennesseeans were shouting, laughing; fouled rifles spat here and there. But John Carpenter, staring, uttered a hoarse choked sound and brought up the heavy old Charleville. By General Jackson's Eternal, the brick whiskers!

The broadsword swung. Tobe Hankins tried to parry with his rifle, but failed. The laughter along the rampart ceased, stilled into vast incredulity as the broadsword drove home. Tobe Hankins flung out his arms, staggered, and pitched down, taking the broadsword with him. For an instant the Scot stood panting, glaring around.

Carpenter felt the trigger slip to his finger. The flint scraped, the sparks flew, the pan fizzed; the Charleville roared with stunning shock and surge of thick smoke. The recoil knocked Carpenter off the rampart. Blinded by the flare of the priming, he fell a-sprawl, rolled over, picked himself up, and blinked with smarting eyes as a wild yell went up and men surrounded him.

"By the 'tarnel, you win the bacon! A buck at two hundred paces! Mister, you're a hoss!"

He looked out. The brick whiskers lay across the body of Tobe Hankins. Men had run out to lift Tobe, but he was past lifting. One of them shouted back.

"Ball right through the head, between the eyes! Bare-shanks ended the war, all right!"

Another smother of men all around. The distance to the dead brick whiskers was paced off—a good two hundred paces. Men swore admiringly. The report of that shot slap between the eyes was repeated over and over.

Tobe Hankins was brought in and a blanket laid over him. Men pressed around, examining him curiously, lifting the blanket repeatedly to see him, with the broadsword still through his body. Someone brought in an officer's bonnet for Tobe Hankins' Liz.

Carpenter edged his way through the throng, none too happy about any of it, now that it was over and his blood was cold.

"He's a sly one!" bawled a voice. "Saved his fire to make a showing!"

Carpenter got clear of them, and then halted. Here was Joseph Latour, sweated and grimed with powder, plunging at him with hearty embrace.

"I saw from the artillery. What? The old Charleville from the Plains of Abraham? He is pretty good, that big gun. You're pretty good, Jean. But he strained himself too much—he is broken!"

Sure enough, the tall hammer had snapped, and only a stub hung to the pin in the lock plate. Latour grinned again.

"No matter, only one shot was needed! You've ended the war. Now maybe you be a soldier, eh?"

Carpenter looked at the blanket over Tobe Hankins, and the bloody blade sticking out of it. He shouldered the old Charleville.

"If the war's over, I'm going home and fish," said he. And went.

CLIMBING HIGH

A Fact Story

By EDWIN MULLER

"IF I ever try it again, my equipment will be a parasol and a bottle of smelling-salts."

That was said by one of the first men who tried to climb Mont Blanc. He wasn't joking. He was a strong, hardy climber, of great endurance, but he had come back beaten and temporarily blinded.

It wasn't the savage cold and the fatigue of the endless hours of climbing—he could withstand those. But when he and his party came to the higher levels, without their knowing how, they found their strength of body and spirit sapped and drained away. They could hardly lift one foot above the other. In spite of the cold the sun beat down upon them with a fierceness that they had never known. Breathing was difficult in the thin air. They couldn't force themselves to eat. At last, frightened, they gave it up.

Now it was too late to turn back.

But they came back to try it again. The very fact that they were frightened drove them back to it. That has been true throughout the history of the sport of mountaineering—the fascination of fear has been one of the principal motives that has made men climb.

It was felt by the natives of Chamonix, the valley that lies close under the great dome of Mont Blanc. From their chalets the pine-covered lower slopes tilted up. Above them were the snows, vast snows that had piled up through centuries. Higher still were rocks, fantastic spires and pinnacles, the famous Chamonix Needles. Then snow again and more snow. Last of all the whole mass gathered itself into a final upward sweep and rounded off in a majestic white dome, remote and magnificent.

No man would ever stand on that dome. Any who tried it would be frozen to death, would be swept away by the great winds, would gasp and die in the rarefied air. That's what the natives thought for hundreds of years.

But at last some of the bolder spirits began to wonder. An enquiring scientist, Horace de Saussure, came from Geneva. He studied the mountains, talked with the natives, then offered a large reward to the first who should reach the top. The possibility entered men's minds that the thing might be done.

Tentative expeditions were made, the first hardly reaching up into the lower snows. Among the more enterprising was the village doctor, Paccard by name, a man with a burning zeal for the high places. Another was the peasant, Jacques Balmat. He was a lion of a fellow, with iron muscles and a constitution that could be driven day after day without rest or food. It was his boast that he had never been afraid.

But Mont Blanc made him afraid. Once he made a solitary attack on the peak. He knew that it couldn't be done in one day, so he planned to spend the night among some rocks that broke through the lower levels of the snow. He trudged up for three hours through the pines, then worked his way for four hours more through a tumbled labyrinth of snow and glacier, crossing deep crevasses on fragile bridges of snow, twisting and turning through twisted masses of ice.

But when he reached his rocks the summit seemed as remote as ever. He'd have to go higher for his bivouac. That would mean a night in the snow above ten thousand feet. All men were agreed that that would mean death. Well—he'd see. He went on.

The roofs of Chamonix were dots, the river was a tiny thread. He found a rock that gave him a few square feet of surface. There he settled himself and watched the night come on. There was no question of sleeping; he lay at the brink of an eight hundred foot cliff. With the night came the cold. He kept striking his hands and feet together to keep them from freezing. A mist slid down over him, began to spit snow in his face. He beat his hands and feet faster. His wet clothing froze; a dull pain hammered at his head, blended with the thunder of avalanches on the cliffs above. Thoughts of death crept into his brain. To drive them out he began to sing. But his voice was thin and piping, lost in the wilderness of snow and ice. He fell silent.

Jacques Balmat was afraid.

But he got through the night, eventually made his way down safely to the village. And the fascination of the mountains, of the danger, worked in him so that soon he was ready to start again.

This time Balmat and Paccard went together. They bivouacked lower down, below the level of snow and ice, even though that would mean more work the next day. They left the bivouac when the faint gray line of dawn appeared over the summit. Balmat knew the labyrinth better now; he worked his way confidently over and around the crevasses, beneath the leaning pinnacles of ice. They started in the endless grind up the snow slopes above.

A wind was blowing up from the valley. The higher they went the harder it blew. Where the slope steepened and bare ice had to be crossed it threatened to tear them away bodily and dash them down precipices. Sometimes they had to throw themselves flat on their faces and hang on.

Their strength began to run low. They

had been going for twelve hours. But now the top was in plain sight. They struggled on, heads down, gasping for every breath. Every ten feet they had to halt. They had an overpowering desire to sleep.

Then the angle of the slope eased off, and unconsciously they moved faster. They were walking on level snow. They stopped—looked up and around—there was nothing above them. They were on the summit of Mont Blanc.

That was a hundred and fifty years ago. It was the beginning of the sport of mountaineering. Since then it has developed into something far beyond the imagination of those early climbers. Today Mont Blanc by the regular way is considered only a long, wearisome snow trudge. Second and third rate mountaineers make ascents the thought of which would have made the hair prickle on the scalp of the bold Balmat.

IT HAS been a progress in technique, and, to a lesser degree, in equipment. The modern climber doesn't have much more in the way of artificial aids than Balmat. The latter's long, iron-shod pole, the alpenstock, has developed into the ice ax, a short shaft with an iron point at one end, the other like a pick-ax, with a broad blade, for cutting hard snow and a long, slender point for ice. The rope is vitally important. The boot nails have been ingeniously adapted to holding on slippery surfaces. Sometimes they are supplemented by crampons, sharp pointed climbing irons with which to walk on steep snow slopes. The most modern school has developed the use of pitons, iron spikes to drive into cracks in the rock or into ice slopes.

The important progress has been in technique. In Balmat's day and for many years afterward they were afraid of steep rock slopes. They never dared to venture on the sort of face where you look down past your heels at a sheer drop of a thousand feet to the glaciers below. They climbed where gentler snow slopes led them to the top. But most of the Alpine giants can't be climbed that way. There's no snow avenue to the top of the Matterhorn.

Men looked at the precipices and speculated. They ventured a little way up. It was terrifying, and for that reason they came again and went a little higher. Gradually they learned ways to climb safely on cliffs that were close to the vertical.

They learned the art of balance—how to stand and move securely on footholds only wide enough to accommodate two or three of the boot nails. They learned how to protect themselves by belaying the rope on projecting bits of rock. They acquired a variety of knowledge of all the different kinds of holds—press holds, underslung holds, insecure holds that are safe for a pull from one direction but not from another.

The art of chimney climbing was developed. A chimney is really a wide, up-and-down crack in a sheer rock face, perhaps two to four feet wide. It may have no holds worth using. No matter, you can climb it, if you've been taught how.

Press your back against one wall, your feet against the other, rise by a series of lifting motions. But don't try it unless you're securely tied on the rope to someone who knows how.

Suppose the crack is too narrow to get into. That calls for another technique, wedging one arm and leg in the crack, using the other arm and leg for friction holds.

It would take a large book to describe all the technique of modern mountaineering. In fact there's quite a library on the subject.

BY THE opening of the twentieth century the application of this technique had conquered practically all the summits of the Alps. For the experts there was no longer much thrill in the established routes. They were forced to pioneer new routes, harder ways of getting up.

For example:

On the eastern side of the valley of Nikolai, in the Swiss Canton of the Valais, is a massive group of peaks, the Mischabel. One of them is the Täschhorn. It was climbed long ago, and the regular route presents few difficulties to

the modern mountaineer. But, at the beginning of the century no one had attempted its south face. Seen from the valley that face is a great black triangle of precipice, the base resting on a glacier, the apex, 5,000 feet above, the delicately pointed tip of the summit. Only the upper part looked to be of a steepness approaching the vertical.

The party that tried it consisted of two English experts, G. W. Young and V. J. E. Ryan, with three of the best guides of the western Alps, J. Knubel and the Lochmatter brothers, Franz and Josef.

They started from a climbers' hut in the before-dawn hours of a day that seemed to promise fair weather. The lower rocks were easy enough. But, as they climbed higher, hour after hour, they found that the face was deceptive. From below it had looked like a series of steep pitches, separated by more or less level platforms on which they could rest. It proved otherwise. The platforms tilted down at the angle of a steep roof. The strata of the rock ran the wrong way, so that the holds, such as they were, sloped down and outward. There was no rest between the sheer pitches, instead they had to cling their way up the roof slopes.

They should have turned back. But the slope led them up insidiously, promising always a level resting place that never materialized. The hours of the morning went by. Then, when they were two-thirds of the way up, the sky darkened and a light snow prickled on their faces. Soon it turned to large flakes. Now it was too late to turn back—the snow would make the slabs below them about impossible to recross.

They worked their way anxiously up slabs that grew steeper and steeper. It was the sort of climbing where the rope is of no use; there were no projecting points on which to belay it. If one should fall he would pull the others off with him.

They came to within six hundred feet of the summit, thinking always of the easy way down on the other side. There they were halted.

In the almost vertical face of the mountain was a great niche, as if it had been carved out for a giant saint. The five of them clung to the slippery, sloping floor of the niche. Eighty feet above them its roof bulged out, overhung. To go further they would have to work out to the side, around and above that overhang.

Franz Lochmatter started, one hundred and fifty feet of rope tied to his waist. By imperceptible inches he crept up the outer side wall of the niche. At last he was over their heads, around the overhang, past it. He disappeared from their view. There were a few minutes of silence while the rope ran out slowly.

Then suddenly there was a scraping sound, the sound of boot nails slipping over granite. Franz's legs shot into sight above. The others turned to the rock, tried to cling tighter. But somehow, by crushing his hands into the rock, Franz managed to avert his fall. His legs drew up out of sight again.

Presently he called down and Josef started to climb. He too disappeared above the overhang. It was Ryan's turn. He rose slowly up the side wall, was not far below the overhang. But the rope from above dragged at him sideways, dragged the harder for every foot he rose. At last, with a cry of warning, he had to let go his holds. He swung out like a pendulum, not touching the rock. His weight drew the rope loop tight around his chest, choked the breath out of him. After a few struggles he hung limp.

The two guides above were in a desperate position. The pitch was so near the vertical that they had to cling tight, each of them having only one hand free with which to pull. By straining effort one of them would raise the dead weight an inch, the other would hold the gain. Minutes went by. To those watching in the niche it seemed that Ryan rose more slowly than the hour hand of a clock. The last reserves of strength must be draining out of the arms of the two above.

But at last they made it.

Ryan's body was drawn up beside them. When the rope was loosened he gradually recovered.

That was the climax. The other two came up with somewhat less trouble. The slope above slowly eased off its

angle and soon the five were sprawled on the summit, with the easy way down before them.

THE years went by and every season climbers came from all over Europe, then from all over the world, to do battle with the peaks. For a while the war interrupted them, and for four years the Alps were left alone. Afterward the climbers came back in greater numbers than before. Always the fascination of danger drove them to try harder and harder routes. It wasn't done without cost. Climbers deliberately took chances, and sometimes the chances went against them. Every season had its casualty list.

A few years ago four young Frenchmen came to Zermatt, planning a series of the hardest climbs in the district. Two of them were experts; the other two had not yet won their spurs.

For their first climb they chose the Breithorn. It stands in plain view of the tourist hotel at the Gornergrat—a great, rounded dome of snow supported by steep buttresses of black rock. It has one route that's very easy, a long wearying tramp up gentle snow slopes. But to climb it by the buttresses in front is another matter.

The Frenchmen were too impatient to wait for safe climbing weather. On a morning that threatened storm they started for the foot of one of the steep black ribs.

Whenever a dangerous climb is attempted the platform in front of the Gornergrat is crowded. There's a line of tourists waiting at each telescope. On this occasion the crowd included relatives of the Frenchmen, the wife of one of them.

As soon as the rising sun brought light enough to see they found the climbing party through the telescopes. They were on the crest of the ridge, mounting slowly, as it was nearly as steep as the buttress of a cathedral. They watched them through the glasses all through the early morning hours. The men were climbing well.

Presently the weather, which had been uncertain, took a turn for the worse. Dark clouds formed among the peaks, began to drift across the face of the Breithorn. Behind those clouds hail or snow must be driving in the faces of the climbers.

But the four were almost up. By early afternoon, in an interval between clouds, they were seen to have reached a point only one hundred and fifty feet below the summit. That was the hardest part of the climb. The rock had steepened almost to the vertical, and by now it must be thickly glazed with ice. They were climbing more slowly; through the glasses their movement was scarcely perceptible.

Then—they stopped.

The clouds hid them from sight for longer intervals, but whenever they were visible, they were there in the same place, the four of them strung out on the rope, one above the other. For five hours they stayed there, moving neither up nor down. One could imagine the leader struggling to get higher, weighing the chances of getting down. Their hands and feet must be growing more numb every minute, getting nearer to the point where fingers must relax from their grips. There was nothing that the watchers could do.

Heavier clouds shut down and for half an hour they were hidden. When the curtain lifted the climbers were gone. Next day a party of guides found the four bodies on the glacier two thousand feet below.

NOW the scene shifts back to the Chain of Mont Blanc.

I spoke of the Needles, the Chamonix Aiguilles, that cluster around the central dome. They were left quite alone by the early climbers. There was good reason for it. Seen from any angle they look completely impregnable. Like church spires, each a mile high, twisted and shattered into shapes that would seem improbable in a bad dream.

One of the most impressive of them is the Charmoz. Its north wall can be seen plainly by the tourists who walk out on the frozen surface of the Mer de Glace. From the glaciers the rocks rise steeply for thousands of feet. Then comes a

hanging glacier, an exceedingly steep slope of ice covered with hard snow. Above that the rock wall is almost perpendicular, and is split almost up to the summit by a couloir, a gulley, whose walls are glazed with ice.

Again the attacking party is French, the two brothers de Lepiney, brothers-in-law of one of the men killed on the Breithorn. They started for the peak one day near the close of a season of bad weather.

They found the lower rocks harder than they had expected. By the time they had reached the hanging glacier darkness was upon them. It meant a bivouac on the rocks.

It grows bitter cold at ten thousand feet after night falls. They huddled close together.

Far below they could see the lights in the valley. Time had never moved so slowly. At last they began to look for the dawn. But then they saw a train crawling through the valley. They knew the time-table—it was only 11:30. Later in the night lightning began to flicker on the distant peaks.

At six o'clock they made their start. At first they climbed rapidly up the hard snow; then, as they got higher, it was steeper and steeper. Their lives were in their ice axes, with which they cut steps and anchored themselves to the slope. They came to the foot of the couloir. It was like a frozen waterfall pouring down between smooth slabs. Only one man moved at a time, and sometimes eighty feet of rope separated them.

The second man was moving. Suddenly, as he was making a turn, his ice ax slipped from his hand. His instinctive clutch at it almost upset his balance; he tottered for an instant, then recovered his holds. But the ax went sliding down into the gulf below.

They didn't turn back. The second man tried to cut holds with his pocket knife, took every step with the most meticulous care. They rose higher.

Then the weather turned against them. Clouds that had hung in the valley below rose up and enveloped them. Snow began to fall. They must finish the climb now; fresh snow would make it impossible to retrace their route down the ice slope.

But now the couloir was vertical, a sheet of transparent ice through which they could see the rock wall. They tried it again and again. It wouldn't go. They had to face the descent.

By luck and desperate effort they got back to the top of the ice slope. From above it looked fearfully steep. And when they got on it they found the snow surface so unstable that a touch was apt to send sections of it sliding away.

The man above had the ax; he drove it deep into the snow while the other groped his way down, both on the rope.

The man below, having no ax, tried to secure himself by burying his arms in the snow. A slip was bound to come. It came. The leader felt the support of feet and hands slide away under him at the same moment.

He made desperate efforts to stop the slide, plunging his arms in. But he began to gain momentum. Then the shock, the violent tightening of the rope around his ribs.

He was sure that his brother had been pulled out of his steps above.

No—the other held by his anchored ax. The fall was stopped. They smiled back and forth at each other.

At that moment came the feeling that they might get down safely. The angle of the slope eased off a little. But now there was another danger. So much of the slope was above them that an avalanche might come down, gathering mass and momentum to sweep them to destruction. They hurried, glancing up fearfully now and then.

From above came a sound, loud yet muffled, like an explosion smothered under sand bags.

They knew what it was even before they saw the mass of snow rushing down on them. They flattened themselves in their tracks.

A rock jutted out of the slope not far above it. The avalanche split against it and only splashes of it poured over the climbers.

A few minutes later they had reached the safety of the rocks.

FALLING from steep rock or ice isn't the only danger of which the mountaineer must take account. Sometimes he is in more peril when walking across a level surface of snow, apparently as safe as a village street.

Once a party of four were crossing such a surface. They knew that there was glacier underneath, but it was a glacier in which crevasses had never been known to exist. Accordingly they didn't bother to put on the rope. A mistake.

One of the four was walking at a little distance behind the others. Although danger was far from his mind his eyes unconsciously moved from side to side, watching for the slight shadows in the snow by which a trained eye can usually spot a crevasse. There were no such signs.

Suddenly one foot went through. Then the other. He dropped out of sight as clearly as if a trap door had opened beneath him.

Instinctively he clutched his ax, held it forward and back. When he recovered from the shock he was hanging by the ax held under his arm-pit. He looked up. A dim light came down through the roof, as if through translucent glass. In the center of the roof, which was perhaps ten feet across, was the round hole through which he had fallen. As it descended the crevasse narrowed until his ax had jammed across the narrowest part. But it barely held. Below, the crack widened again, like an hour-glass, anl his feet hung free in the black darkness below. No telling how far down it went—some crevasses are hundreds of feet deep.

He didn't dare to move lest he should dislodge the ax. He began calling out. But suppose his companions came right back to the hole? They would break through, crash him through the bottle neck down into the depths.

Luckily they had better sense. They made a noose in the rope, threw it at the hole from a distance. It came swishing down on his head. By slow, cautious movements he fixed it under his arms and was able to climb back to safety.

Another danger is the avalanche. One of the most necessary parts of a mountaineer's equipment is the knowledge of when the snow on a steep slope is apt to begin to slide. When it does there's not much he can do about it.

It may start very quietly, only a few square yards breaking off from the surface beneath and beginning to slide slowly. But it takes the climber neatly off his feet and carries him down on his back. He can't stop. The slide acquires speed and momentum until hundreds of tons are thundering down, with great ice blocks rolling ahead.

Men have been carried a thousand feet or more and lived. They've kept themselves on the surface by swimming motions of arms and legs until the avalanche came to a halt. But more often they have been crushed and smothered beneath it, or carried over the edge of sheer cliffs.

The most modern school of climbers has followed the fascination of danger too far. At least that is the belief of the majority of mountaineers. The latter say that an annual death roll of two or three hundred in the Alps alone is too high a price to pay for a sport.

Take the Matterhorn, for example. Its appearance must be familiar to everybody—a pyramid of four ridges enclosing four faces, rising to a point so steep that it seems to overhang. For generations after Mont Blanc had been conquered the Matterhorn was still virgin.

Then a shrewd climber, Whymper, began to suspect that it was not as impregnable as it looked. He studied the Swiss ridge from all angles, decided that it could be climbed. He did climb it, and although on the descent there was a disaster that killed four of his party, he had showed the way to others. Nowadays the Swiss ridge is climbed safely by hundreds in every good season.

Presently the other three ridges fell in turn. They are steeper, harder—one of them exceedingly so—but, to a climber who has acquired the necessary degree of technique, they are not exceedingly dangerous. The faces that lie between the ridges are another matter. Until quite recently nobody even thought of climbing them. Not because of the

difficulty—they are no harder than the ridges. But to climb them courts a danger that the most perfect technique can't avoid.

Like every other great mountain in the Alps, the Matterhorn is disintegrating year after year. Water seeps into the cracks of the rock, freezes and gradually splits off masses of rock from the solid faces. They come thundering down in rock avalanches, sometimes small, sometimes hundreds of tons at once. Each face is raked by a barrage from morning until night.

Guides and prudent amateurs keep to the ridges. The guides—and there are no braver men—won't even venture out on a face to recover a body, although that is one of the strongest traditions of the Alps. There's a hut up on the Swiss ridge, two-thirds of the way to the summit. The little platform in front of it is on the edge of a long, sheer drop down the east face. Once a member of a climbing party, relaxing at the hut, stepped backward too close to the edge. He fell. His body is still there—they say that it can be seen through telescopes from the valley.

THE thrill seekers of the super-modern school decided that the faces of the Matterhorn could be climbed. And they have been, each at the cost of lives.

The east face gets the worst bombardment. Most of it is easy climbing, though excessively dangerous. But the last six hundred feet is one of the sheerest precipices in the Alps. The party that climbed it spent eleven hours on those six hundred feet, and every minute of every hour stones were falling past them. Twice members of the party were struck by small fragments that drew blood. They got up at last.

Such climbs—and there have been many of them—have drawn sharp criticism from conservative mountaineers, along with some of the methods used by the dare-devils in pushing their search for thrills.

As noted above, a part of the equipment of the modern climbers is the piton, a spike to drive into the rock to use as handhold or foothold. These were accepted grudgingly by the older school. Now the piton is the basis of a new technique of climbing that grows more complicated every year.

The piton has a hole in the blunt end into which a snap-ring can be fixed. The climber's rope slides through this ring. This opens up many possibilities of anchoring the climber on sheer walls without natural holds, and of working upward even across overhangs.

The pioneers of this advanced technique have been the Bavarians. They have an ideal practise ground a short distance from their city of Munich. On any clear day they can look out to the south and see the ragged peaks of the Wilde Kaiser. They aren't as high as the giants of the Swiss Alps, but they are even steeper. There are cliffs where a stone dropped from the edge won't touch the side for a thousand feet. On a fair Sunday in the season half the able-bodied population of Munich go there, some to climb and some to watch.

Let us watch one of the parties, one composed of top flight experts. They are at work on one of the thousand foot precipices. The crux of the climb is halfway up, where, above a smooth and holdless slab, an overhang bulges out.

The leader reaches the smooth part. He manages to get a piton in here, another there. On them he balances precariously, every movement as delicate as the flutter of a butterfly's wing; a gust of wind would upset his balance. Ten feet below, the second man, standing on a tiny ledge, watches him anxiously.

The leader, his left foot balanced on a piton, reaches for a wrinkle in the rock a little above his right hand. His arm stretches—he hasn't quite got it—stretches further.

Then he miscalculates, stretches a little too far. He topples. In a fraction of a second he's hanging head downward twenty feet below. The second man was able to hold.

The leader is brought back to the ledge. There for some minutes he stands gasping until he has recovered from the shock. Then he tries again. This time he manages the long stretch, gets above it. Now he's under the bulge of the overhang. He reaches up and out, finds

a minute crack, taps a piton into it. He reaches up and with a snap-ring threads a rope through the piton, drops the end to the second man. Then, holding the doubled rope with both hands, the leader plants his feet flat against the cliff and walks up the overhang, his head for a moment lower than his heels.

Is is said of those who make such climbs that if they are still alive at twenty-seven years of age, they are incapable of doing anything more, so great is the strain on the nervous system.

PERHAPS the ultimate thrills come to those who make solitary climbs. That is a form of gambling with death that is condemned by ninety-nine out of a hundred mountaineers. Yet there are few who are addicted to it. We don't know much about their exploits; as a rule, they don't publicize themselves. But one of them has told some of his experiences.

He found himself once on top of a summit ridge in the Eastern Alps. Fifty yards away, along the almost level ridge, was the highest point of the mountain, from which an easy way led down to the valley. But could he get over those fifty yards? The ridge was a knife edge of rock, tapering at the top to no wider than a garden wall. On the rock wall was another wall of snow. Its fragile crest curled over like a breaking wave—a cornice, it is called.

He started along it, along the highest part of the breaking wave. With extreme care he hollowed out a step with his ax, thrust his knee into it. Then another step. Straight down, many hundred of feet, he could see a party walking on the level surface of the glacier. But after one look he held his eyes to the ridge.

Any disturbance of his balance would have been fatal. His heart pounded. His ax found a coating of ice so that he had to grip it like a vise.

Halfway across he got on his feet. He reached forward to cut a step, struck a little too hard. A section of the snow on which he was about to put his foot fell out, left a round hole through which he saw the glacier below. His nerve almost went then, he had to stop for a while, praying that no breath of wind would come. Then forward again, step after step.

To cross the fifty yards took him three-quarters of an hour. He says that it added several years to his age.

That, nearly every climber would agree, is carrying the fascination of fear too far. In mountaineering, as in any other sport with a spice of danger, it's hard to say just where to draw the line. Perhaps it should be drawn here. Every climber should keep well within the limits of what he can do, should maintain always a margin of safety. And no climb should be undertaken which has factors of danger beyond the climber's control.

Taken in that spirit, as it is by the great majority, mountaineering can be sane and yet be the greatest sport in the world.

Cow-country deputies, if I ever saw any. . . .

HUMAN INTEREST STUFF

By DAVIS DRESSER

YOU want a human interest story for your paper on the execution tomorrow? A guy is slated for a one-way trip to hell in the electric chair, and all you see in it is a front page story!

That's your business, of course. I never blame a man for doing his job. I've kept my mouth shut up to now for Sam's sake, but he won't mind after the juice is turned on in that little gray room.

You're right. There is a whale of a story that hasn't been told. I guess it's what you'd call human interest stuff, all right.

I'm the only person that can give you the real low-down. Me, and one other. But it's a cinch the other fellow isn't going to talk for publication.

All right, if you promise to hold it until after they throw the switch tomorrow morning. I wouldn't want Sam to be sore at me for spilling it.

Yeah. There's a gap of five weeks unaccounted for from the time Bully Bronson's murderer crossed the Rio Grande going south until he came back to fry in the hot seat.

A lot of living can be packed into five weeks. A hell of a lot, Mister.

It's funny the way things worked to bring Sam and me together. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but things don't—south of the Border.

I drifted into the railroad construction camp that morning, needing a job bad and not caring what kind of a job it was.

The American engineer, Hobbs, was down with tropical dysentery and was all set for a trip back to a hospital in the States. He had a young assistant he'd planned to leave in charge of the work, but the youngster was new to Mexico and just the night before I hit camp he had gone on a tear and drunk enough *tequila* to make the mistake of insulting a Mexican girl.

The girl's father drained the cactus juice from his belly and left him in bad shape to take charge of a construction job.

With his fever at 105, Hobbs was in a tight spot when I happened along. They were filling the last gap in a railroad line that was to connect St. Louis with the west coast of Mexico and with the Orient by ship, and the rainy season was due in about six weeks.

That meant the fill and culverts had to be in place within six weeks—or else. The last gap was across that valley south of Terlingua, where plenty of water runs down from the mountains during the rainy season.

And there was more to it, really, than just beating the rainy season. The history of the St. Louis, Mexico & Asiatic Railroad goes back a lot of years to a group of men in St. Louis who dreamed of a direct route from their city to the Orient.

They backed their dream with money and started building the S. L. M. & A. from both ends toward the middle. Something happened—they ran out of money, I guess—and got the American end to within a hundred miles of the Border, and the Mexican end about two hundred miles south of the Border.

For forty years, the line was in a receivership and that three hundred mile gap was the difference between a dream and reality.

Just last year, they got money from somewhere and started filling that gap.

Now, it was narrowed to four miles, and you can't blame Hobbs for jumping at any chance to get the grade finished before the rainy season came along and held them up another six months.

Yeah, that's just what he did. He asked me a couple of questions to see if I knew my stuff, then put me in charge.

They took him north in a Ford ambulance at noon, and his assistant died at four o'clock—the Mexican knife having drained more from his belly than just the over-dose of *tequila*.

That put it strictly up to me. A job I hadn't been formally introduced to, an all-Mexican crew of two hundred muleskinners, a four-mile fill with drainage culverts to get in place—and the rainy season to beat.

I sat up all night in Hobbs' tent with a gasoline lantern hanging from the ridge-pole, going over the blue prints and field books, trying to get the feel of the job.

We started moving dirt in the morning, and I tried to be all over the job at once.

MEXICANS are funny. I'd rather work a job with Mex labor than any other kind, but they do take lots of bossing. The one thing they haven't got is initiative. They'll do anything they're told, and do it well, but they have to be told or they won't do a damn thing.

I was going nuts before the morning was half over. I had a transit set up in the middle of the gap, and a level at each end of the fill that we were working both ways.

Running from one instrument to another; setting a few curve stations with the transit; trotting back to drop in some blue-tops at one end of the fill; then going back to the other end to re-set slope

stakes that had been dragged out by careless wheelers—it had me gooofy.

With two hundred teams moving dirt all the time, you understand, and I had to keep them moving.

I was standing behind a level, cussing my Mexican rodman who was holding the level rod upside down on a stake, when I heard an American voice behind me:

"You wouldn't be needing a spare engineer, Mister?"

A million dollars wouldn't have sounded as good to me right then. I pushed back my hat and wiped a muddy mixture of sweat and dust from my forehead. The man was sitting a roan mare, looking down at me. He wore white whipcords and a white shirt, but he looked at home in the Texas saddle.

His eyes were blue and there was a flame in them. He didn't blink while I stood there and stared. He was about thirty, and there was red sunburn on his face like a man gets when he comes fresh into the blistering heat south of the Rio Grande.

I couldn't quite figure him out, but I only asked one question:

"Can you run a level?"

He stepped off the roan onto the soft fill and came toward me. There was a bulge under his shirt on the left side. I've seen enough shoulder holsters to know what it was.

The way he stepped up to the level, squinted through the telescope and adjusted the focus to his eye was all the answer my question needed.

You can tell just by the way a man walks up to a tripod whether he knows his stuff or not. It's a trick of seeing the position of the three legs and not stepping close enough to any one of them to throw the instrument out of level. Engineers get so they do it subconsciously, and it's a sure way of spotting a phoney.

He didn't know the Mexican lingo, but you can set grade stakes with arm signals. I gave him the field book showing grade elevations for each station and told him to go to it.

I asked him his name as I started to the other end of the fill.

He gave me a steady look and said: "Just call me Sam."

That was all right with me. I would have called him sweetheart if he'd wanted it that way. I was so damned glad to get some help that I didn't care how many babies he had strangled back in the States.

I took three deep breaths and moved on down the job. Things began to take shape when I had time to study the blueprints and get squared around. With Sam handling one instrument, I felt the job was whipped.

BY quitting time that night, everything was going smoothly. I could see it would be a cinch to finish in six weeks if Sam stuck with me.

I told him so after a feed of *frijoles con chile* and *tortillas* that the Mex cook dished up.

We were sitting together in the tent, and Sam nodded. He didn't say anything. He was tired, and the sunburn on his face had deepened to a fiery red. He slouched back on his bunk and seemed to be busy with private thoughts.

I got up and fiddled with the radio, a battery set that Hobbs had left behind. I got it working, and tuned in a news broadcast over a Fort Worth station. The announcer's voice crackled in the quiet that had fallen over camp in the twilight:

"The search for the slayer of Bully Bronson shifts below the Mexican Border tonight. Authorities are convinced that Bronson's assistant engineer, who murdered his chief in cold blood after an argument in a highway construction camp, has slipped through a cordon of officers in the Big Bend section and made his escape across the Rio Grande. This station has been requested by police to broadcast the following description to Mexican authorities who are warned that. . . ."

I reached over and snapped the radio off. Sam was sitting up straight, watching me through slitted eyes. Three buttons of his shirt were open and his right arm was crooked at the elbow, gun-hand where it could go inside his shirt in a hurry.

I said: "To hell with that stuff. Everybody in this part of the country

knows Bully Bronson needed killing. I hope they never get the guy that did it."

Sam relaxed a little. He reached in his shirt pocket for a cigarette, drew out an empty pack. I tossed him my makings of Bull Durham and brown papers. He tore two papers and spilled half a sack of tobacco before he got a bulging cigarette rolled and licked.

When he had it burning, he said: "But murder is still murder." He clamped his teeth together, like he was having a hard time keeping from saying too much.

"It's not murder when a guy like Bully Bronson gets bumped," I argued. "Hell, I know fifty men that'll sleep easier tonight because Bronson is dead."

"It's murder when a man waits until another is asleep, then blows the top of his head off with a shotgun." Sam's voice was thin and shaky. His cigarette went to pieces in his fingers when he tried to draw on it.

"There's a lot of things that go into a killing like that," I told him. "No one will ever know how much the killer took off Bronson before he got up nerve to do the job. And, from what I know of Bronson, I figure it was smart to wait until the old devil was asleep, and then use a shotgun to make sure of doing a good job."

Sam got another cigarette rolled without tearing the paper. He said, low:

"The law still calls it first degree murder."

I nodded. I was watching his face. "If the law ever gets a chance to say anything about it. If he's across the river, he doesn't have to worry about the law."

"There's such a thing as extradition."

I laughed. "You don't know this country like I do. Extradition is just a big word south of the Rio Grande. What a man has done back in the States doesn't count against him down here. A man leaves his past behind him when he crosses the river."

Sam thought that over, dragging on his brown-paper cigarette. His lips twisted and he asked:

"Can a man ever get away from . . . his past?"

I stood up and yawned. I knew something was going to crack if we kept on along that line. I said:

"Hard work is the best medicine for that kind of thinking. We've got a tough job in front of us here. It's going to take all both of us can do, working together, to put it over."

I turned my back on him to give him time to think it over and get my meaning straight.

There was just enough daylight left to see the end of the railroad fill there in front of camp.

It's an ugly, hard country south of the Big Bend. Nothing will grow in the hot sand except mesquite and cactus, and the only things that can live are lizards and long-eared jack-rabbits.

You forget how ugly it is in the darkness. Even the bare thorny mesquite and the spiny cactus plants look friendly. You're able to take a deep breath again after trying not to breathe all day for fear of burning your lungs.

I remember every little thing as I stood there in the open doorway of the tent waiting for Sam to say something. A mule squealed in the corrals, and some of the Mexicans were singing to a guitar accompaniment.

Did you ever hear Mexicans singing one of their native songs? You've missed something.

A coyote howled on the far rim of the valley while I stood there. I suppose you've never heard a coyote's howl drifting through the darkness across a valley either? That's something else you've missed.

Sam's voice was harsh, close to my ear: "The job isn't my lookout."

I pulled a lot of the cool evening air into my lungs. I knew this was the showdown. I had to make Sam see it my way.

"It's my lookout, Sam. I didn't ask for it, but here it is, dumped in my lap. It's up to us to get the fill in place before water starts running down from the hills and washes it out."

He leaned against the upright supporting pole and looked out over the valley.

I nodded toward the fill. "It's our job, Sam."

There was a twisted funny look on his face. "Engineers are damned fools."

I agreed with him. "They just wouldn't be engineers if they weren't. They'd

be ribbon clerks or shoe salesmen."

He laughed, and I know he was thinking about a murdered man across the river:

"Men die and other men run away from the electric chair, but there's always a job to think about."

I turned back into the tent. I knew Sam was going to see me through. I said:

"After we get the grade ready for the track-laying crew will be time enough to talk about other things."

He nodded, came back and sat on his bunk. The twisted look was gone from his face. "I suppose it might help a man . . . to get one more job under his belt."

Ho took off his shirt, showing a shoulder harness with a .45 automatic in a clip holster.

Neither of us said anything as he unbuckled the harness and hung it over the head of his bunk.

It stayed there until the job was finished.

IT wasn't tough, as such jobs go. The usual run of luck you run into on construction work. Rock where you don't expect to find it, and so much sand in the fill that it wouldn't hold a two-to-one slope.

Too much *sotol* in camp on pay nights, grudges settled the Mexican way with knives which left us shorthanded until we could get more teamsters.

Sam was plenty okay. He didn't have an awful lot of experience on dirt work, but he was built out of the stuff that makes engineers. With all the guts in the world, and never trying to get out from under when there was extra work to be done.

Lots of nights those first two weeks we worked until twelve or later under the hot glare of a gasoline lantern, figuring mass diagrams to balance the cut and fill, changing gradients.

Never a word between us about the search for Bully Bronson's murderer—and the radio stayed turned off.

Your mind gets numbed after so long on a rush job that takes everything you've got. There aren't any tomorrows and the yesterdays don't count.

There's only the present—with the heat and the dust, swarms of sand-flies, the shouts of teamsters getting their loaded wheelers up the hill, a thick haze rising from the valley with snow-capped mountain peaks showing dimly through it from the southwest, the two ends of a narrow railroad grade creeping toward each other so slowly that you'd swear you were making no progresss at all if you didn't have station stakes to tell you different.

Two white men on a job like that are bound to get pretty close, or learn to hate each other's guts.

During those weeks Sam and I got about as close as two men can ever get. Without words, you understand. Neither of us were the kind to shoot off our mouths.

It wasn't the sort of thing you talk about. Working side by side fifteen or twenty hours a day, words get sort of useless.

I quit being the boss after the first couple of days. We were just two engineers pushing a job through.

After it was finished?

Hell, I didn't know.

I didn't waste any time thinking about what would come after it was done. I don't think Sam did, either.

Maybe one of us was a murderer. That didn't count. See what I mean? The job was the only thing that counted.

No. I suppose you don't understand. You're a newspaper reporter. You've spent a lot of years practicing to get cynical. A job, to you, means something to work at eight hours a day and then forget while you go out sporting.

You asked for human interest stuff. I'm giving it to you even if you don't recognize it.

Five weeks dropped out of the lives of two men while time stood still and a construction job went on.

YOU'RE going to snort when I tell you how it ended. You're going to say it doesn't make sense and that men don't act that way.

Maybe it won't make sense to you. Maybe your readers won't believe it if you print it.

But it did happen like I'm telling you.

By the end of three weeks I'd forgotten what I'd guessed was his reason for crossing the Border in a hurry. His automatic still hung at the head of his bunk, and neither of us had mentioned Bronson's murderer since that first night.

But you can't get away from a thing like that. It was with us all the time.

Sam was right when he said a man can't leave a thing like murder behind him just by crossing a muddy stream of water.

That's why I got a prickly feeling up my spine one afternoon when I saw two riders pushing up a little cloud of dust in the valley between us and the river.

There was that subconscious sense of fear that had been riding me all the time. The feeling that our luck couldn't possibly hold, that there was bound to be a pay-off.

I was running the last bit of centerline with the transit. Sam was on the far end of the fill, staking out a drainage culvert.

I swung the telescope on the riders half a mile away, and it brought them right up to me.

I knew I had guessed right. They spelled trouble. Slouching in the saddle, wearing dust-stained range clothing with cartridge belts slanting across their middles.

They were headed toward camp and I knew I had to keep them away from Sam if the fill was going to get finished.

I left the trasit sitting there, and walked back to camp. The two riders were pulling in close when I stepped inside our tent.

One was a heavy man with a gray mustache. The other was long and lanky with a scar on his cheek. Both carried six-shooters in open holsters, and had saddle guns in boots slung beneath their right stirrup leathers.

Cow-country deputies, if I ever saw any.

They pulled up in front of the cook-tent and yelled for the cook. When he came to the door, the heavy one said:

"We heard across the river that you had a new gringo engineer here. Is that right?"

The cook was scared. He bobbed his head, sir: "*Si, si, Senior. Es verdad.*"

The scar jumped up and down on the thin man's face. "Where's he at? We've come to take him back."

I waited to hear what the cook would say. He'd seen me pass by on my way to the tent. But Sam was new on the job, too, and he might send them out to Sam.

He didn't. He pointed to the tent and told them I was inside.

I slid back and got hold of Sam's automatic. It was cocked when I met them at the door.

They didn't take time to get a good look at me. They saw the automatic and reached for their guns.

I was lucky. I got one through the hand and broke the other's shoulder.

Then I called to the cook to bring some rope, and made him tie them up while they cussed a blue streak and told me I couldn't do that to the Texas law.

They were still cussing when I loaded them onto their horses and took them to the nearest town; ten miles south.

A ten-dollar bill is talking-money to a *pueblo* chief of police. They had an *adobe* jail that I hoped would hold together until the job was finished. I knew it would be at least that long before they could get a message across the river and any action on it.

That's the whole truth about that affair—the first time it's been told. Sam didn't have a thing to do with it. He didn't even see the deputies. I told the cook to keep his mouth shut, and I told Sam the two shots he heard were me plugging at a coyote. I don't think he believed me, but he didn't ask any questions.

I know the government kicked up a row over the jailing of the two deputies in Mexico, but it happened just like I've told you. They were out of their own back yard, and they got what they were asking for when they crossed the Border.

N THE job rocked along. We were getting dirt moved and no one else bothered us.

It's a funny country that way. People don't bother you much. Hell, there have been revolutions begun

and ended without ever getting into the newspapers. The Mexicans have a queer way of tending strictly to their own business and letting the other guy tend to his.

That is, it'll seem queer to an American newspaper man. You make a living sticking your nose into other people's affairs and you wouldn't understand a Mexican's lack of curiosity.

But that's the way they are. It was as though our construction camp was in a vacuum, and we slept and worked and ate in that vacuum with no contact with the outside world.

There was a feeling of tensity between Sam and me as we began to see the end of the job coming up. We were going to finish a week ahead of schedule, but neither of us was any too happy about it.

When the last wheeler-load was dumped in place on the fill it was going to mark more than just the end of another job. It had been swell going while it lasted, but everything has to end.

I didn't know what Sam was thinking when I'd catch him looking at me queerly those last few days as the two ends of the fill came together, and I didn't want to know.

After that last load was dumped to grade would be time enough to find out what Sam was thinking.

We were going on stolen time and we both knew it. But neither one of us slowed up to make the job last longer. Not even the extra week we might have taken before there was danger of rains.

It's something you can't do much about—the pressure to put a job on through when the end is in sight.

I knew Sam pretty well by that time, better than I've ever known another man, but his private thoughts still remained a secret to me.

I guess no man ever wholly knows what's in another's mind. There's a certain barrier that you can't quite squeeze past. No matter how hard both of you try.

Know what I mean?

You're married, aren't you? All right. Take an honest look at your own thoughts. How well does your wife know them?

Don't kid yourself. Make an honest-to-God checkup on the secrets you keep in your mind from her.

That's what I'm talking about.

There's a part of you that's *you.* Which is probably as close to a definition of the human soul as anyone will ever get.

That's the difference between a man and an animal. You can pretty well figure what an animal will do under a given set of circumstances. Only God ever knows what a man is going to do.

Which pretty well brings us up to the morning Sam and I stood and looked at the completed railroad fill. It was ten o'clock in the morning and the last yard of dirt had been dumped and spread to grade.

Sam had been to the tent, and he came back to see it ended with me. It was in the cards.

All at once, it was over. Teams were standing idle, and the Mexicans were squatting on their heels, sucking on *cigarillos.*

The sun was searing down and there was a heat haze hanging over the valley and everything was pretty much like it had been for weeks—except that our job was done.

The track-laying crew would be coming along with cross-ties and steel. Trains would soon be running on schedule over the grade we had sweated out our guts on, and no one would think a damned thing about it.

The job didn't seem so important after all.

I LOOKED at Sam and I saw the same bulge inside his shirt that had been there when he first rode up on a roan mare. He had gone back to the tent to buckle on his .45.

That gave me an idea what to expect, but I still wasn't sure what he had on his mind. I said:

"I don't know why it makes any difference, Sam, but I would have hated to quit before this was finished."

He said: "I know how you feel," and we both stood there without saying anything for a little.

I didn't look at him when I said:

"There's other jobs waiting to be done, south of here."

"I know. It's too bad we can't do them together."

"Can't we?" Hell, I was so choked up that's all I could trust myself to say.

Sam wasn't choked up. His voice was clearer, harder, than I had heard it before:

"I'm afraid not. They're still looking for Bronson's murderer across the Rio Grande."

"Do we have to worry about that?"

"Haven't you known all along that it was *my* worry?"

I had, of course. There wasn't any use trying to lie to Sam. I saw that same gleam in his blue eyes that had been there the first time I saw him.

My lips were parched. I wet them with a tongue that felt like a dry sponge.

"What are you figuring on doing, Sam?"

"I've got to go back across the Border where I belong."

Well, there it was. Things had been building toward that ever since he stepped off the roan and took hold of the level.

I had known it was coming all along. Sam was that kind of an hombre.

Enough of an engineer to stay and see the job through, but too much of a man to take the easy way and go on down into the tropics with me, where they don't give a damn how many men you've murdered.

I said: "I'm ready whenever you are. It's been swell knowing you, Sam."

And we shook hands.

There, Mister, is your human interest yarn. You know the rest of it. The newspapers gave the story a heavy play when we crossed the Border together. There were headlines about the lone American who had gone into Mexico and brought out Bronson's murderer single-handed.

The feature writers did a lot of guessing about what happened during those five weeks.

Your paper will be the first to carry the straight story.

Am I sore at Sam?

No. Not even when I sit down in that chair tomorrow to pay the price for killing Bronson.

You see, Mister, I know how Sam felt about finishing *his* job. They picked him to go after me because he'd studied engineering in college.

But his real job was with the Texas Rangers.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

ALONG with his story "A Cowman Never Quits," Charles W. Tyler sends these remarks by "Shorty Lang," Shorty talking on the subject of what crazy fellows these writers are anyhow.

Some folks wonder where a writing hombre gets his characters. Being an author, they figure he's about half nuts anyway, and, maybe, makes medicine with ghosts. But Shorty Lang don't figger it that-away. Shorty, you tell the folks.

"Neighbor, yuh took the words right out of my mouth. Friends, the first time I seen this bird was in Wyomin'. That was a lot of moons ago. He was takin' a run at a hump with an old Tin Liz. He'd *almost* make the rim; then he'd back way down on the flat an' give it to 'er again, an' a patient-lookin' woman would run after him with a rock an' try to chuck the wheel, but he'd be rollin' back before she could ketch him. I says, 'Shorthorn, what in hell are yuh tryin' to do?' He says 'I'm goin' to Wyomin' to write about cowboys.' 'Heck,' I tell him, '*This* is Wyomin'!' So I tie my rope to the axle, expectin' that flivver would explode any minute, an' put a dally on the horn an' we scratch over the hump, an' was that woman grateful.

"The next time I see Ty was in Cheyenne. He was tryin' to trade a Sioux buck out of a pair of beaded moccasins. He was offerin' an old sombrero. An' then there was that coyboy dance in Cody, an' the next day we went to see George Inman at his gun shop near that stack of elk horns down the street. George was a scout under Bill Cody. Then later we meet up out of Livingston at a ranch back in the hills. A couple years after that I drift south, punchin' cattle in the Gila country in Arizona, an' who do I run across but this ranny diggin' his fliv out of sand in a wash. I never see such a migratory jasper. A year or so after that, I hear a familiar voice, an' here he is again, tryin' to butt through one of them self-cockin' cattle gates near Kerrville, Texas. The little woman had went on a sit-down strike, on account she says she opened forty gates in two hours, an' damn bob wire an' gates. She was all for open range.

"Then one night I was doin' a job of desert ridin' with some stuff at Black Water Well near the old Ballarat road, an' here was this waddy shivverin' around a camp fire. He allows he wa'n't never so cold since he used to milk cows of a winter mornin' back in Hinsdale, New Hampshire. The next time him an' me cross tracks, I was dude wranglin' in Death Valley, an' I says, 'For gosh sake, don't yuh ever stay home?' 'Reckon yuh heard of Shorty Harris?' he says. 'Well, I just come from his place at Ballarat. He's on the prod. A feller shot one of Shorty's burros, an' Shorty is huntin' him with a .30-30.' That night we listened to 'Johnny Behind the Gun', John Cyty, that would be, tellin' about the times that are gone. Johnny was the quickest man behind the trigger in Death Valley. Johnny had a mine up on Chloride Cliffs, an' for twenty years he guarded the old water hole at Stovepipe Wells. An' later on, when I was lookin' around the Mohave for a place to start the Rollin' L, I met this Tyler hombre gettin' an eyeful of the 'Barnyard Court' at Dagget, with Judge Dix Van Dyke, sittin' on a bench in the yard, hearin' the case of two prisoners, one of 'em sittin' beside him. The next time him an' his lady friend was prowlin' around Searchlight, Nevada. I says, 'What the blazes ails yuh—what are yuh lookin' for?' An' he says, 'Characters.

An' things to write stories about.' 'Reckon he has a tough time findin' 'em. He asked me, an' I says I didn't know any myself—just a lot of right nice desert folks."

A QUERY and reply in Ask Adventure about the Massacre of Balangiga has brought detailed responses from comrades who were out in the Philippines at the time. We'll hear from Colonel Albert T. Rich, U. S. A., retired, who lives in Malden, Massachusetts.

I was a Sergeant, Company "B," 43d U. S. Volunteers in 1899, 1900 and 1901. The regiment was stationed along the North Line—north of Manila near Blockhouse No. 5—immediately after arrival in the Philippines. In January 1900, the regiment was a part of General W. A. Kobbe's Expedition to Occupy and Open the Hemp Ports on the Islands of Samar and Leyte. The regiment occupied these two islands from January 1900, to June 1901. The service performed by the regiment included 451 engagements—381 where casualties are known to have occurred. Casualties in regiment: 53 killed, 2 drowned, 2 captured and 58 wounded. Casualties Filipino: 1646 killed, 346 wounded, 3,521 surrendered and 1,640 captured.

In 1909, while serving as Aide de Camp on the staff of the Commanding General, Department of the Viscayas, I was directed to prepare a report, for file with the Intelligence Records, of the engagement at Balangiga. I found that the best way to secure information was through talk with survivors, both Americans and former Insurgents. I talked with General Lucban, the Commander in Chief of the Insurgent Forces on Samar and Leyte who surrendered to Lieutenant Alphonse Strebler, Philippine Scouts (formerly Sergeant, Co. "I," 43d U. S. Volunteers) on February 18, 1902. A photograph of this surrender can be seen in "Collier's" July 19, 1902. General Lucban was a Tagalog and had been trained as an officer in both Spain and Germany. As one of General Aguinaldo's most efficient field officers, he had been selected to organize and command the Insurgent forces in the Visayas. In order to gain a first-hand knowledge of this Insurgent leader, upon whose shoulders some place the blame for the events at Balangiga, it might be interesting to quote from a report submitted by the late Sergeant George F. Doe, Co. "I," 43d U. S. Volunteers, who, with Corporal Fred Allen of the same company, was a prisoner of General Lucban.

"About the 1st of April, we arrived at the town of Tami. This was the first place at which we saw General Lucban, he having come down from San Jose to meet us.

We waded through a river and up to a small rise of ground to meet him. He was attended by his secretaries and a bodyguard of 15 soldiers armed with rifles. The Chinamen or Insics as they were called by the Filipinos, nine in number, went down on their knees and tried to kiss his hand. This he would not allow and waved them aside.

We were not tied as tightly as we had been, but were allowed to use our arms, and as he approached we stood at attention and saluted him in our best manner.

He promptly came to us and shook hands with us and then took us up to a shack where he was staying. He was dressed in a pair of linen drawers, tied about the ankles, a cotton undershirt, bareheaded and barefooted. He is a Tagalog of medium height and about 46 years of age.

Here he ordered our bonds to be taken off altogether and sent for some cigarettes for us and brought out a bottle with two drinks of cognac in it, saying he wished us to drink it, as we looked tired out and that it was all he had or he would give us some more. While here, he asked me why we did not go on our knees like the Insics did when he approached. I replied that it was not the custom for Americans to go on their knees to any one. This seemed to please him much.

Seeing that we were dirty, he sent us to a river nearby to wash, and sent some natives to wash our clothes. After this we put on our clothes again, though still wet, and returned to his shack. Here he gave me a pair of white trousers to wear and a cotton undershirt, saying that he only had two in the world. A *Teniente* likewise gave some clothes to Corporal Allen to wear while our own were drying. Then he had a goat and two chickens killed for a feast for us which we enjoyed. After supper he sent us over to another shack across the trail where his officers and secretaries were quartered, and there we stayed that night.

* * *

Both Sergeant Doe and Corporal Allen were exchanged some months later and told me personally that as far as they were able to learn, General Lucban never authorized any mutilation of American dead or cruelty to prisoners.

The plans perfected by the *Jefe Local* and the Chief of Police of Balangiga had been attempted several times against garrisons of the 43d Infantry without success. One instance firmly impressed on my memory is one that occurred in the barrio of Jaro on the island of Leyte. This barrio was

garrisoned by a detachment of Company "B," 43d Infantry, under the command of Second Lieut. Estes.

Within a few days after the detachment arrived in Jaro and had taken over the convent—next to the church as it was in Balangiga—the *Jefe Local* (Mayor) suggested to Lieut. Estes that all prisoners be utilized as laborers on the streets and that he would see that sufficient were secured to quickly complete the "clean-up." Nothing had been mentioned about this plan to us enlisted men which was natural in those days. Possibly it was a fortunate thing for all concerned that nothing had been said.

Corporal John H. Farmer (Granville, New York), Corporal John R. Maukert (Annapolis, Maryland), Private Samuel McIntosh (Master Sergeant, U. S. A., retired, Ironton, Missouri), and I were standing in front of the entrance to the convent when a group of about 250 natives were noticed passing through the town toward the convent. This group was led by the *Jefe Local.* Corporal Maukert remarked something to the following effect, "Sergeant, it looks to me as if there were a hell of a lot of natives down there with the *Jefe Local.* More than are necessary. Suppose these gugues get up here around the convent and church and bust loose. Doesn't look good to me." Being green and untrained to Filipino methods and knowing nothing about Lieut. Estes' plans, we stopped the parade and obliged all the natives to place their bolos in an ox-cart they had with them. Nothing happened until the Lieutenant got back to Jaro from Carigara, and then *something did happen.* We were mighty near kicked out of the service for our unnecessary (???) performance of alleged misconstrued idea of military duty. The bolos were given back to the natives but not until we had marked a cross on each handle. Over a hundred of these bolos were taken off the dead Insurgents after the Easter scrap soon after when fifteen hundred attacked the convent only to be driven off with a loss of several hundred killed.

Brigadier General F. D. Grant, U. S. Army, in his report for the year ending June 30, 1902, on the affairs of the Sixth Separate Brigade which he commanded with headquarters at Tacloban, Leyte, on the engagement at Balangiga—as follows:

"At the formation of the brigade the Insurgents of this section have never been brought completely to terms; and, though in Leyte civil government has been inaugurated, Samar still remains under military rule. During September, 1901, Company C, Ninth Infantry, Captain Thomas W. Connell, commanding, stationed at Balangiga, Samar, was, through the negligence of over-confidence in the friendliness of the natives, surprised, and almost the entire garrison massacred. Their bloody success at Balangiga encouraged the Insurgents in increased activity throughout Samar. * * "

I believe that this statement is wholly unjust. The Ninth Infantry was, and is, one of the finest fighting regiments of this, or any other, country. It had served in Cuba, in China where its commanding officer was killed in action, and in Northern Luzon. Captain Connell was one of most efficient officers in the regiment and was ably assisted by Lieut. Bumpus. Major Griswold, who joined the garrison at Balangiga just before the fight, was also highly regarded as an efficient officer in the Medical Corps of the U. S. Volunteers. Three finer officers could not have been selected for the service at this detached post in the interior of a hostile country. The non-commissioned officers and many of the privates were men of long experience in the regiment.

Irrespective of what prompted this error in military judgment, the fact remains that those who went down under the bolos of the invaders carried many of the Insurgents with them. They fought with bare fists, mess kits and whatever they could lay their hands on. The cook died fighting with his meat cleaver.

Verified reports—and statements from those who made the hurried trip to Balangiga from Basey—indicate that the bodies of the slain were mutilated beyond description. One report was that the heads of the officers were opened at the crown and the space filled with jam taken from the sales stores; that dead soldiers were opened up and the insides filled with the contents of tomato cans; and other indescribable acts of barbarians.

COLONEL RICH sends us a copy of the file of official messages following the slaughter. The one most in point is the report of Captain Bookmiller, who marched to Balangiga immediately after the survivors came with news of the uprising.

I have the honor to make the following report of the action at Balangiga on September 28, 1901. This report is based upon information given by men who escaped from Balangiga and from my personal observation on scene of action the day following.

Company C, Ninth Infantry, occupied on September 28, 1901, the building marked

"E," "F," "G," on accompaning sketch (Inclosure No. la). (Footnote states that this sketch was not printed) The officers of the post, Captain Thomas W. Connell, Ninth Infantry, First Lieut. Edward A. Bumpus, Ninth Infantry, and Major R. S. Griswold, Surgeon, U. S. Volunteers, occupied the convent "A." This building has its main entrance at "L," where a sentinel was stationed during the day, and at night at the head of the stairs. The passage leads from second story to church; stairs connect this passage with rear of building and door of church. The guard at convent consisted of a corporal and 3 men.

The entrance of main barracks was at center of west side, from which stairs lead to second floor—the sleeping quarters. The center of the lower floor was the guardhouse. The north end was used as a prison and storeroom. It contained quartermaster and ordnance stores. Of the latter, there was one box containing 23 rifles and 22 boxes of rifle ammunition. The south end was used as a sales commissary storehouse. At northwest corner of this barracks were two conical wall tents in which native prisoners were confined. No. 1 sentinel walked from entrance of building to these tents. No. 4 on opposite side of tents, and No. 3 from kitchen "H," past barracks "G" to "F." The main barracks could be entered by a few men only in that angle of the barracks.

Fifteen men occupied barracks "G," 9 occupied "F" and the remainder of the company, "E."

The streets shown on sketch were lined with native houses, except that there were none in block "C," "D," or that occupied by main barracks. At the end of streets to north and east was dense undergrowth. This undergrowth covered most of the space between houses in the different blocks, consequently many natives could be concealed from view and be quite near the quarters.

On September 22 Captain Connell had collected 78 natives of the town and held most of them prisoners for police work. During the next four days the town officials brought in prisoners from the country, and nearly all of the prisoners living in the town had been released, a number presenting themselves each morning for work. On September 27 the chief of police informed Captain Connell that he would bring in more on the morning of the 28th. He sent in 13 on the afternoon of the 27th, but he did not return with them. Sixty-four prisoners were held over the night of the 27th.

These prisoners had been making nipa for the roof of barracks and worked between the tents and the main building. The bolos used by them, 60 in number, were piled in front of building 3 feet north of entrance.

At 6:30 a.m., September 28, breakfast time, a number of prisoners were at work and about 20 more had appeared voluntarily near No. 1 post and the tents, apparently waiting to be set to work by the first sergeant. The first sergeant was at this time at breakfast in the kitchen. Nearly all the men were at breakfast in tents in front of the kitchen. The men who lived in barracks "C" were eating under this building; some few were walking to or from the kitchen. At the guardhouse there were but the sentinel on No. 1 and the sergeant of the guard. Private Gamlin, a member of the guard, had taken breakfast, went to his quarters in main building to return his mess kit, and immediately relieved the sentinel on No. 2 post. When he was in quarters he saw no one in them.

Corporal Burke, with others, were at breakfast under barracks "G." The chief of police came near him, leaning against pillar of building, then walked along post No. 2 toward barracks "F." As the sentinel passed him he seized the sentinal's rifle, gave a loud call, the church bells rang, and a rush was made by the natives simultaneously on the different barracks, officers' quarters, and on men at breakfast table and kitchen.

Then sentinel on No. 1 and the sergeant of the guard were killed at once, and the native prisoners and others near rushed into the main barracks. From east of kitchen the natives rushed upon men at breakfast.

A few men gained entrance to the main barracks by a ladder at northeast corner of building; others rushed up the stairs with natives; some were cut down in attempting to reach the building. A struggle ensued to obtain possession of the rifles.

At barracks "G" the men under building rushed into it with the natives; but all the natives who entered this building were killed or driven away; and from this building 8 rifles were secured and fire opened upon the insurgents which drove them to cover. When this firing began some natives threw rifles out of the windows of main building; others jumped out with them. In this way more rifles were secured and the entire force of the enemy driven back.

At the officers' quarters, which were entered from the church and rear by the enemy, First Lieut. E. A. Bumpus, Ninth Infantry, and Major R. S. Griswold, Surgeon, U. S. Volunteers, were killed in their rooms. Captain T. W. Connell, Ninth Infantry, evidently jumped from window and was killed about 20 feet from the building. The two members of the guard were both killed at sentinel's post.

Acting First Sergt. James M. Randles was killed in kitchen.

When the enemy was driven back Sergt. Frank Betron, being the senior non-commissioned officer present, took command.

After holding the place for an hour, during which enemy kept on outskirts of town but made no attack, Sergeant Betron collected the wounded and embarked in five barotos for Basey, 25 miles distant. Before leaving dock Sergeant Markley, with two men, returned to barracks for flag and to burn the building, but was fired upon and did not succeed in burning it.

Sergeant Betron, with 2 barotos, arrived at Basey at 4:00 a.m. September 29. His party consisted of 25 men, 22 of whom were wounded, and 2 bodies of men who had died enroute.

Sergeant Markley and 1 private had been sent ahead to report, but had lost course and landed at Tanauan, Leyte.

When last seen 1 baroto contained 3 men, 2 of them severely wounded. One of these men, Private Powers, was seen on the coast dead early next morning by Private Bertholf. The others, Privates Wingo and Driscoll are missing.

The other baroto, containing Privates Bertholf and 3 wounded, Marak, Litto Armani, and Buhrer, foundered. These men reached shore, where they remained during the night. At daylight Privates Bertholf and Marak set off to find a baroto. When they returned with one they saw Armani and Buhrer surrounded by insurgents and they were forced to abandon them. Privates Bertholf and Marak were picked up at sea later by my command en route to Balangiga.

At 9 a.m. September 29 I left Basey with 55 men Company G and 8 men Company C on steamship Pittsburg. Landed at Balangiga at 12:30 p.m. As it could be seen that the insurgents were abandoning the place, I opened fire as soon as the steamer arrived within 500 yards of the town. As we entered the town the main barracks were burning, but it was evident that the ordnance had been carried away. Twenty-three rifles and 22,000 rounds of ammunition were in the basement of this building.

Of the 68 rifles in hands of men, 23 were brought to Basey and 4 lost at sea. Twelve others were rendered unserviceable by throwing away the bolts.

The insurgents secured 52 serviceable rifles and, with that taken in belts, 26,000 rounds of ammunition.

I secured most of the commissary supplies, nearly all of which were burned, it not being practicable to take same aboard ship.

The bodies of the 3 officers and 29 men were buried in plaza in front of church.

The town was burned. Command embarked at 6:15 p.m. and reached Basey at 12 midnight.

The total garrison consisted of 3 officers, 1 Hospital Corps men and 70 men of Company C, Ninth Infantry.

Three officers and 29 men were killed at Balangiga; 1 Hospital C Corps man and 5 men of company missing at Balangiga, undoubtedly killed and bodies consumed in barracks or carried out to sea; missing en route to Basey, 2; killed en route to Basey, 3; died of wounds en route to Basey, 2; arrived at Basey or Tanauan, Leyte, 29, 22 of whom were wounded. The number of insurgents killed is estimated at 50.

The number of insurgents who took part in the attack was about 400.

It is not known who was the leader of this attack, but the town presidente and the chief of police were, at least, the organizers and promoters. The presidente was near the kitchen when the attack was made. Both of these men were killed.

Very respectfully,
EDWIN V. BOOKMILLER,
Captain, Ninth Infantry, Commanding.

SOME of the Camp-Fire comrades may have read "Blackcock's Feather" before, but not many, we think.

You'll recall that a year or so ago we published "No Quarter" by Maurice Walsh. It subsequently appeared as a book under the title "The Dark Rose" and has enjoyed an exceptionally fine sale and brought the author the acclaim of the critics.

"No Quarter" set us looking for other work by this author, and we came across "Blackcock's Feather." It had been published, in book form only, and its sale was so limited and its author so unknown that it is not likely many of you have heard of the story.

We are breaking, this time, our policy of printing a book first, and letting the book publisher follow afterward. We think the story warrants it. This policy has been broken before at rare intervals—it was broken in the case of "The Sea-Hawk" by Rafael Sabatini, which was published in these pages and made the author's fame, but which somehow had been caught first by a book publisher and brought out with the usual small sale of the comparatively unknown writer.

"Blackcock's Feather" begins in this issue.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

A MEMO list for a camping trip.

Request:—My friend and I wish to go on a hiking trip into the mountains and expect to stay for several months. We would like to pack enough with us to last for at least two weeks, so that we could avoid the towns along the way or, perhaps, stop for several days to fish or rest.

We'd like to get a very light sleeping bag which would keep us warm in freezing weather. How much weight would you allow for a sleeping bag and where could we purchase a light bag?

We have never done much camping before, so we'd appreciate any suggestion regarding our camping equipment.

—F. J. Bermensolo, Boise, Idaho.

Reply by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—A sleeping bag to protect you down to freezing can be easily made at home, with a minimum of expense. Get two or three pound wool bats (Montgomery Ward & Co., $3.65 each). With these make a quilt about six by six and one-half feet, using close woven cotton drill for one side and some light woolen material for the other, quilting or tufting to hold the wool in place. Fold over into a bag, with the woolen covering inside, and sew across one end and three fourths the way up the side.

A down-filled bag weighing about half as much as the above can be bought from most any outfitter, but the price will run upwards from $30.00.

I gather that you intend to back-pack your outfit. Two weeks grub supplies will run the weight of your pack up to fifty pounds or more, not including any gun or ammunition you may wish to carry. I'd suggest an outfit something like this:

Balloon-silk "A" tent, 7 x 8 ft., with waterproof ground cloth and rope ridge.
Cook kit, nesting of two pots, coffee pot, frying pan, bowls, cups, plates, forks & spoons.
Axe, boy's size or Hudson's Bay type.
Folding canvas bucket.
Sheath knife.
First-aid kit.
Compass and maps. Those issued by the U. S. Geological survey are best in detail.
Extra shirts, underwear and socks.
Acetylene miners lamp and carbide.
Small stores: hand full of assorted nails, coil of copper wire, heavy cord, small whetstone, sewing kit of heavy needles and thread, etc.

The following grub list, two men for two weeks packing, is one used by my trailmate and myself:

Bacon	5 lb.	Sweet chocolate	3 lb.
Ham	3 "	Rice	2 "
Dried beef	1 "	Oatmeal	2 "
Dehydrated soups	2 "	Baking powder	½ "
Cheese	2 "	Dried beans	2 "
Lard or Crisco	1 "	Coffee	1 "
Powdered Milk	1 "	Cocoa	½ "
Powdered Eggs	1 "	Tea	½ "
Flour	8 "	Sugar	6 "
Meal	4 "	Raisins	2 "
Evaporated fruit	4 "	Salt, pepper, etc.	1 "
		Total	52½

This will give you a varied and well-balanced ration. In the scope of a letter I can't tell you much about camp cooking, and suggest that you order from the Book Department of Field & Stream, 515 Madison Ave., New York, a copy of "Camp Cookery," by Horace Kephart. The price will be $1.00 plus postage.

HISTORICAL ballistics.

Request:—We know from the old relics that have been found here in Nevada that the Spaniards were in this country at one time. What I am trying to find out is whether they were one of Coronado's exploring parties or of the later bunch of St. Franciscan Fathers? Coronado visited South Utah in 1540, and the Franciscans in 1776.

A cowboy found an old Spanish gun and part of a breastplate some years ago in a cave here in the Sheep Mountain range, near a spring. In the same range is the faint outline of some old stone cabins. The Piute Indians here have an old legend about some white men years ago treating them rough. It may be that they were the St. Franciscan party trying to find the trail to Monterey, Calif., but the breastplate and wheel-lock gun makes me think it was some of Coronado's men.

Any data you may have on the subject and your own opinion will be appreciated.

—B. R. Stuart, Moapa, Nevada.

Reply by Mr. F. W. Egelston:—"The Journey of Coronado," (Winship) may be in the Nevada State Library at Carson City, and it might be possible that the Nevada Historical Society, Reno, could give you some authentic dope on early Spanish explorations in this state.

The wheel-lock gun was a contemporary of Coronado. Had this relic been left by the Padres it would have been a flintlock, which came in the 1700's.

An inquiry to the Historical Society may give you a lead, and E. C. D. Marriage, State Librarian, will be able to advise you as Winship's book and any others which may be in State library.

FISTIC facts.

Request:—I am an amateur boxer in a very small way and I'd be very grateful if you would send me a daily routine to follow in training for a bout.

—Jack Shires, C. C. C., Grand Junction, Colo.

Reply by Captain Jean V. Grombach:—Start about six or four weeks before the fight. Get up enough before breakfast to run and do your road-work which consists of the following: Walk a minute, lope or run easily a minute, and sprint a minute, going through this a great number of times. Do not strain yourself but build up gradually. Then come in, shower, have your breakfast and go about your daily business. In the late afternoon or, if your work won't permit, in the evening but never less than three hours after a meal, you have your main work out.

Watch your diet. Be sure it's good wholesome food. Since you haven't mentioned your weight, I can't help you specifically, but I do advise that a day or two before the fight you start drying out particularly if you have weight to "make."

Hope this is just what you wanted and . . . good luck!

THE sinister spider—the black widow.

Request:—I am interested in the black widow spider as they seem to be the most vicious pest we have out this way. I was bitten by one of them and since that time have spent a goodly portion of my time in hunting them down and exterminating them.

I am particularly interested in their habits of abode, type of breeding places, etc. What antidotes are effective in case of bites when one is far from medical aid? Apparently the black widow is on the increase so as to really present a serious menace; some persons were bitten in this vicinity in the last year.

—C. W. Beauchamp, Albuquerque, N. M.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—The eggs of the black widow are laid in sacs in the nests which are irregular webs superficially like the common house spider. The spideralings spend several days in the sacs, then emerge and cluster for a few days more in the web. After this they scatter and construct their own nests. The young spiders feed on small insects.

They inhabit dark cellars, and are found under boards, etc.

It is difficult to exterminate them especially in outdoor locations. In cellars they might be killed by a thorough fumigation with cyanide and sulphuric acid. Fumigation should be conducted by a specialist as the gas is very poisonous.

Little positive suggestion can be offered for treating the bite of the black widow. (1) Call a doctor. (2) Remember that the bite of the black widow is treated differently from snake bites. The poison of the black widow is almost instantaneous and first aid measures are useless. (3) Iodine or other antiseptic should be used at the point of the bite to prevent secondary infection. (4) Avoid alcohol or other stimulants. (5) Opiates administered by a doctor give relief and rest, which is much needed. (6) Intravenous injections of magnesium sulphate also gives considerable relief and in some cases rapid recovery.

You can obtain further information from Bulletin No. 591, University of California. This is a complete treatise on the subject and will be valuable to you.

YOU can't carry out your kill—if it's a moose.

Request:—A friend and myself anticipate going into Canada for a ten or twelve day moose hunt this fall. The most convenient way for us to get to Canada from here would be to drive up to the Straits of Mackinac and cross over to the Soo. Starting from the Soo (Sault Saint Marie) how far would we have to go to get into country where our chances of running into other hunters would be pretty slim? How close to such a locality could we get driving a car?

We want to take in our own supplies and want guide to rustle his own equipment. We will do the cooking. Want guide to keep us from getting lost and to hunt with us. How much should a guide cost us for such a trip and where can we contact one? If we do pack in this far, how would we get a moose or two out (if we are lucky) besides our duffle. Even if we quarter them they still weigh a ton or so? Could we get some place by water and portage between lakes? How about early freeze-ups? I am used to camping out, but not in Canada or moose country. We plan to cut wood for an all night fire. Will sleep in clothes and change underclothes to avoid damp clothing. I can get everything in my pack except my partner's sleeping bag. He will carry own bag and grub, ammunition.

—H. M., Oscoda, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Ernest W. Shaw:—First, I suggest that you write to the Dept. of Game and Fisheries, Toronto, Ont., Can., for map, seasons and fees.

Now in brief, you will have to put up a deposit amounting to the duty on your equipment, which will be refunded on returning. If you want to come out by some other port that might cause you annoyance. Also you will have to hire a guide. You might find one to furnish himself only, but most guides furnish the outfit and themselves at so much per day, you furnishing the food.

I have no great knowledge of road conditions since 1934 in southern Ontario. Believe that in north portion the only roads are the kind you ride in canoes on. There is some great hunting north of the R.R. Unless changed since I went through, there are no paved roads in the country you will travel. The main highway from the Soo East are improved gravel and dirt, and good enough mostly. There is moose country north of Cutler in the Picard Lake country, but no roads unless recent and doubt it. But you can stop there and make inquiries. If the layout doesn't fit your ideas, you can hit better country by going still further east to Sudbury and then fair country road north to Larchwood and Levack. North of these points is good moose country.

I believe the Dept. of Game and Fisheries can give you names of guides.

If you have to pack in you will have to figure a mighty light bill of grub. Tea straight for drink, as you can use without sugar and canned milk and get by and, a pound of it will last ten days, where a pound of coffee wouldn't last half that time. You will want flour and beans and salt, but not too much meat since you should be able to get a deer for meat quickly, but you can rely on your guide for that information, and follow his suggestions as to food.

Of course, if you get a team to tote you in and come after you, you can go as heavy as you like on the grub, and at the same time get out your game. Don't know how you will make it packing out two moose if you are both lucky. The head alone is some pack. If you bone all the best of the meat you should have not less than 300 lbs. of good clear meat.

If you hunt all day, you will not care to cut wood to keep an all night fire going, or at least so I think. Be sure you take enough bedding. Sleep in underclothes and get some real rest which cannot be done with all your clothes on and its really warmer so.

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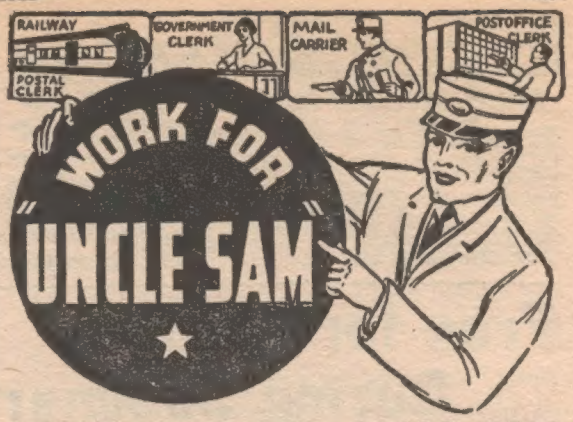

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EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.35
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES (High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
$4.25	$1.95	
30x5	3.95	1.75
32x5	4.25	2.25
34x5	4.25	2.25
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65
6.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95

ALL OTHER SIZES

Size	Tires	Tubes
32x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.85
32x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES (High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.65
38x7	10.95	4.65
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.65
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

DEALERS WANTED

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

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2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 1170-A, Chicago, Ill.

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STOP THAT ITCH WITH D.D.D. Prescription

HERE'S QUICK RELIEF

For quick relief from itching of eczema, rashes, pimples, athlete's foot, and other externally caused skin eruptions, use cooling, antiseptic, liquid **D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.** Greaseless, stainless, dries fast. Stops the most intense itching in a hurry. A 35c trial bottle, at all drug stores, proves it—or your money back. Don't suffer longer.

STOP THAT ITCHING AND SCRATCHING

According to the Government Health Bulletin No. E-28 at least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

There are many other names given to this disease, but you can easily tell if you have it.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form and the skin cracks and peels. After a while the itching becomes intense and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

FOOT-ITCH
(ATHLETE'S FOOT)

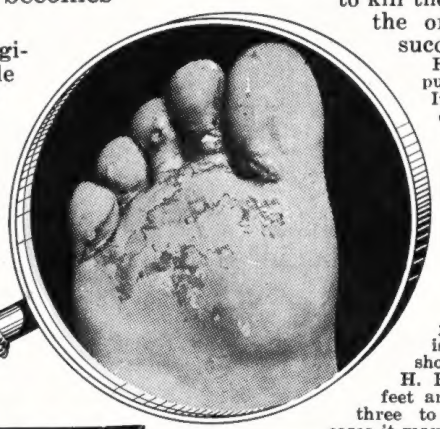
Send Coupon—Don't Pay till Relieved

Beware of It Spreading

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

It has been said that this disease originated in the trenches, so some people call it Trench Foot. Whatever name you give it, however, the thing to do is to get rid of it as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Most people who have Athlete's Foot have tried all kinds of remedies to cure it without success. Ordinary germicides, antiseptics, salve or ointments seldom do any good.



Here's How to Treat It

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows that it takes 20 minutes of boiling to kill the germ, so you can see why the ordinary remedies are unsuccessful.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of treating Athlete's Foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. It peels off the infected skin and works its way deep into the tissue of the skin where the germ breeds.

Itching Stops Immediately

As soon as you apply H. F. you will find that the itching is immediately relieved. You should paint the infected parts with H. F. night and morning until your feet are well. Usually this takes from three to ten days, although in severe cases it may take longer or in mild cases less time.

H. F. will leave the skin soft and smooth. You will marvel at the quick way it brings you relief; especially if you are one of those who have tried for years to get rid of Athlete's Foot without success.

H. F. Sent on FREE TRIAL

Sign and mail the coupon and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money, don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you we know that you will be glad to send us $1.00 for the treatment at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.

Mail this Coupon

GORE PRODUCTS, INC., P.P.
815 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a complete treatment for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better I will send you $1.00. If I am not entirely satisfied I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

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